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ABU'L KALAM AZAD

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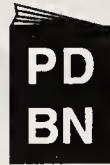


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About The Series

The object of the series is to record for the present and future generations, the story of the struggle and achievements of the eminent sons and daughters of India, who have been mainly instrumental in our national renaissance and the attainment of independence. Except in a few cases, such authoritative biographies have not been available.

The biographies are planned as handy volumes written by knowledgeable people and giving a brief account in simple words, of the life and activities of the eminent leaders and of their times. They are not intended either to be comprehensive studies or to replace the more elaborate biographies.



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Publishers' Note

The manuscript of the book was prepared by the author in Urdu. Care has been taken to conform to the original as far as practicable. Yet some deviations had to be made to suit the requirements of the English language. In rendering Urdu couplets, our effort has been to convey their broad meaning rather than the subtleties or the rhythm.

Preface

It is not easy to present the life-history of Maulana Abu'l Kalam Azad in correct perspective. Himself s prolific writer, Azad has been written upon extensively, both in India and abroad. Also, sometimes facts have been distorted or fiction interwoven into facts. To chronicle the biography of this great man objectively, from the plethora of material, was indeed a challenging task. It was rewarding too, for I always found something thrilling in the rich and varied life of Azad. My endeavour in this volume has been to bring together the stray strands and, to the best of my ability, I have tried to be objective.

While a bibliography has been given at the end, I deem it my duty to acknowledge my gratitude to those from whom I have benefited most, particularly K.G. Saiyidain and Malik Ram whose writings I have freely quoted or referred to. Other notable references : “*India Wins Freedom*” by Maulana Azad; “*Anwar-e-Abu'l Kalam*”— collection of papers edited by A.J. Zaidi and presented at a seminar in Srinagar; “*Zikr-e-Azad*” by Maulana Abdur Razzak Malihabadi; “*Aasar-e-Abu'l Kalam*” by Kazi Abdul Ghaffar; and “*Indian Muslims through the Ages*” by Dr. Abid Husain. These books were of immense help to me and it would be most ungracious on my part not to acknowledge this. Maulana Azad’s own writings and publications and the relevant literature published by the Publications Division have been listed in the bibliography.

When Maulana Azad’s mortal remains were being carried in a procession through the streets of Delhi, the assemblage, which included the present writer, was a vast humanity. Young and old, rich and poor, men and women and children had

foregathered in thousands to pay homage to a universally respected leader. It was remarkable that there were few eyes which were not wet in the memory of one who preferred, particularly during the last few years, to live in comparative seclusion, away from the hurly burly of public life. Was this withdrawal from the public gaze, one wonders, prompted by a premonition that he was soon going to attain eternal loneliness? He lies buried in an elegant park near Jama Masjid, but again one wonders whether he himself would have chosen this locality where tombs have a way of being converted into public shrines. For Azad, the rebel, abhorred the adoration of shrines. The greatest deterrent to man's mental progress, declared Azad, were his traditional beliefs. He himself was unconventional and firmly believed in carving out his own course, whether in politics or in social customs and practices. Thus while he showed us many new ways and lit many a lamp to dispel our gloom and ignorance, it is entirely upto us to follow him according to our own lights.

That he was a man of great learning, a peerless mixture of the present and the past, one who had mastered the old classics and yet was blessed with the modern scientific temper, need no corroboration. Comparisons are odious and, in this case, we are not even qualified to make any. Even so, the present writer would venture to say that while Azad was proclaimed as *Imam-ul-Hind* (the leader of India), it would be nearer the truth to say that he was worthy of leading the whole of humanity.

While writing about such a great scholar some omissions and commissions are quite likely, for which the writer craves the readers' pardon. As the Urdu poet Mir says:

*Ka'm the ishq main bahut par Mir
Ham to farigh huey shatabi se*

(There are thousands of tasks involved in this business of love. It was I, not love, that gave up so soon).

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Childhood and Early Life

DESCRIBING MAULANA AZAD'S childhood, his elder sister, Fatima Begum, says :¹

“The late Maulana Azad, may God bless him, was four years younger to me. Both of us were born in Mecca. When Azad was two years old, father brought us over to Calcutta where a large number of his devotees resided. My brother, whose real name was Mohiuddin Ahmed, Azad being his *nom-de-plume*, was educated at home, under father's supervision. Azad was a fair poet. Two verses that he composed at the age of 14 are still fresh in my memory.

“My tender heart sheds tears of compassion,
Even when an enemy tells his tales of woes.
Look how my restless self soars high and low,
Ask it something of the earth
And it replies in terms of the skies.”

“As a child Azad was never fond of the games children usually indulge in. even at the age of eight, his games were unique. Sometimes he would line up trunks and boxes and pronounce them to be a train. Then he would tie one of father's turbans round his head and taking his seat on one of the boxes, he would ask us, his sisters, to shout and cry ‘Give way, give way, the Maulana from Delhi is on

1. *Ajkal* (Urdu) September, 1959, pages 14-15. Interviewer was Dr. K.A. Faruqi. This interview was broadcast in English by All India Radio, Delhi, on February 22, 1959.

his way.' When we said, 'Brother, there is no crowd here, whom should we push aside or ask to get out of the way', he would remonstrate, 'Can't you follow this simple make-believe? Can't you visualize that a large crowd had come to receive me.' Then he would get down from the box and walk off slowly and deliberately, like an elderly person. Sometimes he would climb a raised platform and ask his sisters to surround him and applaud him, imagining that he was speaking amidst thousands of persons who were cheering and applauding his speech. I, however, would say, 'Brother, there is nobody here except three or four of us. How can we imagine we are thousands? Again he would say, 'It's all a game. That's how it happens in a game.'

"Once, plague broke out in Calcutta and father dispatched us, children to Hooghly. Azad was about 10 at that time. There was a big garden attached to the house where we were putting up. One day Azad brought in a basketful of custard apples. There were so many of them that I immediately assumed he had brought the fruit from the attached garden and without the knowledge of the owner. 'Brother', I said, 'why have you taken these without permission? What would the owner think or say?' At this Azad's face turned crimson. He rushed with the basket to the well in the house and started throwing the fruit down the well, muttering, all the while, 'Am I a thief! Am I a thief!' After he had emptied the basket, he declared, 'How dare you think that I had picked these fruits without permission? They were all duly paid for?'

"On another occasion our elder sister, who had a temper of her own, told father in our presence: 'Father, all your children are good for nothing. They are like rotten eggs.' At this Azad immediately began to chirp like a newly hatched chick and said, 'No, no, Sir, you know by our chirping that we are healthy chicks, not rotten eggs.'

"Azad had a passion for studying. When he was about 17, a thief broke into our house and finding Azad lost in his studies,

he picked up a cigarette case from the table at which Azad was reading and also removed about Rs. 7,000 from a trunk in the room without Azad being any the wiser. The next day when the loss of the money and the cigarette case was discovered, we started reviling the thief. But Azad said, 'Please don't abuse him. The poor man must be in great trouble and in sore need of money to commit crime. We should rather pity him.'

"Indeed it may be said that Azad had never a real childhood. Even while he was seven years old, it seemed to us that his tiny shoulders bore quite an adult mind."

The above narrative indicates how apparent it was even in those early days that Azad had a bright future and that the prodigious child was bound to develop into a towering personality.

One of Azad's ancestors, Maulana Jamaluddin alias Sheikh Bahlol of Delhi, was a contemporary of Akbar the Great. He was one of the few scholars who had refused to sign the statement acclaiming the king as the founder of a new religious order, although Mulla Mubarak and other leading priests and scholars of the time had readily done so. Jamaluddin's son, Sheikh Mohammad, was a disciple of Hazrat Mujaddid Alf Sani, the Sheikh Ahmad of Sirhind. Saikh Mohammad emulated his father by refusing to pay obeisance to Emperor Jahangir and was imprisoned in the Gwalior Fort for his insubordination. Azad's famous book *Tazkira* chronicles the life of Sheikh Jamaluddin about whom Mulla Abdul Qadir Badauni wrote, in his *Munta-khabut Twarikh*, that "he would have nothing to do with worldly people.' Azad was quite proud of his compliment and wrote:

"This evidence was a source of great delight to me. The idea that (by the grace of God) our family had always distinguished itself with the pursuit of learning and the zeal to serve the cause of *Hadith* and *Sunnah*, that was from the very beginning our claim to distinction consisted in that we

preferred poverty, loved to sit on bare ground and shunned success, which made people speak reverently of us as 'steadfast in the observance of the *Sunnah* beyond the pale of worldly temptations' gladdened my heart and made my mind drunk with happiness."¹

This clearly shows that it was ever in Azad's family tradition to revolt against untruth and injustice and to hold aloft the flag of righteousness.

Some people are doubtful about Delhi being Maulana Azad's home town. One of them has tried hard to prove that he belonged to Kasur in undivided Punjab. The only link Azad had with Kasur was that his paternal grand-mother's father belonged to this place.

Azad's family tree is as follows:

Maulana Abu'l Kalam Azad, son of Maulana Khairuddin, son of Maulana Mohammad Hadi, son of Shah Mohammad Afzal, son of Maulana Mohammad Hasan. All of these ancestors hailed from Delhi, and Azad was perfectly justified in claiming that he belonged to Delhi.

Maulana Munnawaruddin, father of Azad's grand-mother got frustrated at the conditions prevailing in the country during 1855. He decided to migrate to Hedjaz. On his way to Bombay for boarding the ship, he passed through Bhopal. Nawab Sikander Begam, the ruler of Bhopal, was so impressed by his sermons that she prevailed upon him to stay on there. When the revolt of 1857 started, Maulana Munnawaruddin again decided to leave and, after peace was restored, he journeyed to Bombay. There too some of his followers did not allow him to leave immediately. He was further detained by ill health and ultimately passed away in Bombay sometime during 1858-59.

Azad's father, Maulana Khairuddin, who had accompanied Maulana Munnawaruddin to Bombay, however continued his

1. *Tazkira*, page 302, edited by Malik Ram, published by Sahitya Akademi, 1968.

journey to Hedjaz. He had already finished his education in India and hence was able to derive the full benefit from the teachings of the scholars at Mecca and Medina. In 1870-71, he married Alia, daughter of the sister of one of his teachers, Sheikh Mohammad Zahir Vatri. Maulana Khairuddin had five children, two sons and three daughters, by her. The sons were Abu'l Nasr Ghulam Yaseen and Abu'l Kalam Mohiuddin Ahmed and the daughters were Zainab, Fatima and Hanifa alias Mahmuda. Both the brothers used to compose verses, Abu'l Kalam's poetic name was 'Azad' while that of Abu'l Nasr was 'Aah'. Apart from the eldest sister, Zainab (born in Constantinople), the other two sisters were also poetesses, the poetic name of the youngest sister being 'Abroo' and that of the other sister 'Arzoo'. Abroo Begum was deeply attached to Azad. Her husband was employed in Bhopal on a decent salary and they had settled down in that city. Abroo Begum died in June 1942 while Arzoo Begum expired on April 12, 1959 at the age of 82.

Maulana Khairuddin was called 'Hazrat' by his followers and, at quite an early age, Azad acquired the sobriquet of the Junior 'Hazrat'.

Parents naturally exercise considerable influence in the formation of their children's character and personality. Azad's father was a learned scholar and a master of theology. His mother, too, belonged to a family of scholars of Mecca. Their habits and characteristics lent a lofty moral tone to their children's character. Maulana Azad describes an episode of his childhood as follows:

“My father had employed a calligraphist, Hafiz Mubarak Bukhari, for writing and binding his manuscripts. The calligraphist, who lived with us, was not particular about wearing clean clothes and once I did remark that he was a dirty person. My mother softly told me, more by way of advice than of remonstrance. ‘Darling, you should not say so. It is possible that he might be dearer to God than you or I’.”

In another context, Azad wrote about his mother.

“When I consider her moral and intellectual insights, I realize that she was great by any standard. She had an extremely generous and charitable nature and could never see the poor and the stricken in their misery. Once father had taken great pains to acquire a costly shawl for her. The day she wore it, our neighbor, a widow called Mother of Habib, came to visit her. That lady took a corner of the shawl in her hand and said covetously: ‘Naturally, poor people like us can never dream of possessing such a costly thing.’ Hearing this, mother immediately took off the shawl and wrapped it around the widow’s shoulder”.

According to Maulana Azad, he was born in Mecca during the month of Zill Hijja in 1305 AH. He has not mentioned the date. If we correlate it to the Anno Domini, it appears he was born sometime between August 9 and September 6, 1888. In the commemoration volume, published through Government assistance, Humayun Kabir has given Azad’s date of birth as November 11, 1888. But this is not corroborated by any other source. In *Asare Abu'l Kalam*, Qazi Abdul Ghaffar has placed the date of birth during September 1888. His father had given him the date-name of ‘Feroze Bakht’ and had also composed a verse ‘Jawan Bakht, Jawan Tale Nawab Yar’ which too indicates the year of his birth according to the Hijri calendar.

Abu'l Nasr Ghulam Yaseen ‘Aah’ was elder to Azad by two years. When he was six years old his education was inaugurated with customary rituals. Azad started education with his elder brother. For some time, the three sisters also received education along with their brothers.

Maulana Khairuddin remained in Hedjaz for about 20 years before he paid his first return visit to India in 1887. After that he continued travelling between India and Hedjaz till 1897, when he finally settled down in Calcutta. He had sustained an injury in Mecca, a thigh fracture, which could not be treated

there properly. The fracture was healed in Calcutta but it left a defect in the leg.

Azad came to Calcutta with his parents. His education, started at Mecca, was continued at Calcutta with the help of local teachers. In 1902, when he was only 15 years old he had finished the course of Nizami, a feat ordinary students could seldom attain. Immediately after, Azad started coaching others in this course.

A maid, named Aleema, was employed in Azad's household to do tailoring and stitching. Her brother, who was a poet and a writer, persuaded Azad to compose verses. Abu'l Kalam adopted the poetic name of 'Azad' to ensure priority and prominence in poetic selections which were published in alphabetical order. He sent some of his compositions to the reputed poet Ameer Meenai, and sought his guidance. Not satisfied with him, he next submitted a few ghazals for the consideration of another eminent poet, Nawab Mirza Khan 'Dagh'. But Azad soon gave up composing though his brother continued to do so and became more adept in it.

Azad's first ghazal was published in a poetic selection called *Armugham-e-Farrukh* published from Bombay. We give below some specimens of the verses composed by the two brothers:

*Azad : Spring has come and everything wears a new look,
New is frenzy, new aspirations,
Why, even the spring is new!*

*Oh the bewitching ways of the beloved,
When she deals her killing blows,
One would like to kiss her hands.*

*I pine for my beloved
Grief has racked and consumed my body
To such an extent, that there is nothing left in the body;
As for my soul, it already belongs to my beloved.*

Aah : (Published in *Khadang-e-Nazar*)

*Her faithlessness waxes even more,
Stay on, oh, life in my poor body,
As long as she persists in her cruel ways.*

*I lost my heart to her eyes and brows,
And lost face in the eyes of the world,
This, in short, is the tale of my love.*

*My feet are weary,
There are still miles to go,
But the fond heart will not let me tarry or rest,
It marches ahead and beckons me on.*

Obviously, this was merely formal and traditional versification. Azad soon gave it up. But his love of poetry had another outlet. At the age of 12 he became a publisher and issued, in 1900, a poetic journal called *Nairang-e-Aalam*, which continued for eight months.

Having finished his formal education quite early, Azad began to feel the pangs of doubt and disbelief, particularly in regard to religion. Intelligent persons must doubt and question. Azad was not only intelligent but also well read in theology and philosophy, in language and rhetorics, in Arabic, Persian and Turkish, in astronomy and chemistry. He was devoted to poetry and journalism and an adept in translation. He had mastered printing and he was an innovator so far as the use of type for Urdu journalism was concerned. When he reviewed the *Tazkira-e-Sadiqa* in 1901 (i.e. at the age of 13) in verse, the publisher reproduced the review under the heading:

“Review of the learned book *Tazkira-e-Sadiqa* by the Centre of Learning and Attributes, the Master Poet, the Peerless Literateur, Maulvi Abu'l Kalam Saheb Azad of Delhi, presently staying at Calcutta.”

Azad had become so widely known at an early age that people meeting him for the first time were shocked at his tender age and had to be reassured that they were meeting the real

Maulana Azad. This was mainly due to the fact that Azad had acquired fame through his journalistic writings and had impressed people as much by his lofty and inspiring message as by his interpretation of Islam.

In style, his writings were like a swirling stream that swept away superstition and left the readers awed and spellbound.

Azad was only thirteen when his father got him married to Zuleikha Begum, the daughter of Aftabuddin Ahmad, an admirer of Maulana Khairuddin. Aftabuddin, who had five daughters, was a retired officer of the Survey Office. Another daughter was married to Azad's brother Abu'l Nasr Ghulam Yaseen. Azad was married to the youngest daughter and, according to his sister, Fatima Begum, Azad kept crying at the time of his marriage, "Why am I being taken to the women's apartment?"

Zuleikha Begum had a good schooling in Urdu and Persian and knew elementary Arabic. Their only child, a son, died at the age of four. As the child was very handsome, he was named 'Haseen' or the beautiful one.

Zuleikha Begum was an accomplished lady, well-versed in household affairs and of a most hospitable nature. She took good care of Maulana Azad and evinced keen interest in his books and writings. When Azad was writing *Tarjumanul Quran*, she used to keep fanning him till late at night. But Azad's repeated imprisonment had cast a constant shadow of gloom over her and she used to pray for his safety constantly. Gradually she became indifferent to her dress and make up. When Maulana Azad left home to preside over the historic Congress session at Bombay in 1942, Zuleikha Begum, already beset by ill health, sought vainly to repress her agony while saying good bye to him. She died while Azad was detained in the Ahmadnagar Fort.

Azad was a very busy man and fully absorbed in politics and studies, his two passions. Even so, he was a tender-hearted person and a devoted husband. In a letter included in *Ghubar-e-Khatir* he describes how he was affected by the sight of a lonely

grave while detained at the Ahmadnagar Fort and reminded of his wife's death. Describing their last meeting, he writes:

“During the last 25 years I had undertaken quite a few journeys and was imprisoned many a time, but I had never seen her so sad. Perhaps it was momentary weakness that she could not control her emotions. So I thought at that time. But when I come to think of it now, it seems to me that she had some faint premonition that it might be our last meeting during our lifetime. When she bade farewell to me, it was not because I was setting out on a journey but because she herself was to embark on a long journey.”

Describing his return to Calcutta after his release, Azad says, in *India Wins Freedom*:

“As the car was crossing the Howrah Bridge, my mind moved back to the days of the past. I remembered the day when three years ago I left for Bombay to attend the meetings of the Working Committee and the AICC. My wife had come up to the gate of my house to bid me farewell. I was now returning after three years but she was in her grave and my home was empty. I remembered the lines of Wordsworth:

*“But she's in her grave and Oh
The difference to me.”*

I told my companions to turn the car, for I wished to visit her grave before I went home. My car was full of garlands. I took one and placed it on her grave and silently read the *Fateha*.”

The scene can best be imagined. Among the hardships Azad bore for the sake of the country perhaps this was the hardest to bear. But fate is inexorable and events must follow the pattern laid down by it.

A Journalist

IN THE FIELD of journalism, Maulana Azad has left an indelible imprint. After *Nairang-e-Alam*, a poetic journal, Azad founded another journal entitled *Us-Sabah* in January 1901. As it commenced publication on the day of *Eid*, the first editorial was on *Eid*. This editorial was reproduced by many papers including, the *Paisa Akhbar* of Lahore. *Us-Sabah* survived for about four months.

Azad published his first book *Elan-e-Haq* during these days. It was a tract issued in reply to criticism leveled against the unorthodox views of Azad's father, Maulana Khairuddin, in regard to the methods of reckoning the first day of the lunar month by the visibility of the new moon. After this, Azad became a regular contributor to the *Makhzan*, Lahore; *Ahsan-ul-Akhbar*, Calcutta; *Muraqqa-e-Aslam*, Hardoi etc. Munshi Naubat Rai Nazar was publishing a journal called *Khadang-e-Nazar* from Lucknow and Azad wrote to him offering to edit its magazine section provided Munshiji agreed to expand it. Nazar readily agreed and Azad not only published his own prose pieces but also his verses in this journal. When he wrote an article on 'X-rays', Maulana Shibli liked it so much that he immediately requested Azad to write one such article each month for his journal *An-Nadva*.

Azad brought out yet another journal *Lisanu-s-Sidq* on September 20, 1903. It was reviewed favourably by well established papers like the *Vakil*, Amritsar, *Paisa Akhbar*, Lahore

etc. Besides being literary and informative, the journal aimed at social reform of Muslims in India. Azad was only 15 years old at this time. It was this urge to change and improve that later developed with the determination to fight for the country's freedom and to forge national unity – ideals to which Azad held fast throughout his life.

Azad attended the session of the Anjuman-e-Himayat-e-Islam held at Lahore from April 1 to 3, 1904. When Maulana Waheeduddin Saleem of Panipat met the young man, more precisely the young boy, who edited the *Lisanu-s-Sidq* he was astounded and took Azad to Maulana Hali who in turn was amazed and greeted him with great affection. In fact Hali found it hard to believe that the author of the renowned and mature articles was no other than this tender-age youth.

The last issue of *Lisanu-s-Sidq* was a joint issue for April-May, 1905. At this juncture, Azad's elder brother, who was very fond of touring, decided to visit Iraq and Azad also accompanied him along with Hafiz Abdur Rahman of Amritsar. When the party arrived in Baghdad, Azad fell ill and had to return to India. The famous Urdu writer, Syed Sajjad Haider 'Yeldrim' who was posted at the British Consulate in Baghdad was most helpful in arranging for Azad's return journey.

'Aah', the elder brother, however, continued his journey and went to Mosul and thence to Syria where, because of severe cold weather, he was taken ill and his lungs were affected. Thus he too had to return to India but, by the time he reached Calcutta, he was in a critical condition and, despite all possible treatment, he died in 1906. This was a great shock to the father, Maulana Khairuddin, who too passed away in 1909. Azad's mother had died in 1899.

Maulana Shibli, the great literateur and social reformer, who was posted at Hyderabad, requested Azad to take over the editorship of his journal, the *An-Nadva*. Azad was reluctant to accept the offer initially. He however took up the editorship when Shibli left his job at Hyderabad and returned home to

Azamgarh and then shifted to Lucknow. Azad's stay with Maulana Shibli at Lucknow was highly beneficial to him. He moved among the intellectual elite whose discussions, whether literary or theological, were most scintillating and sensitive, and an intelligent young man like Azad must have found them highly stimulating.

Azad stayed in Lucknow only for a few months. Then he moved to Delhi and assumed the editorship of the *Vakil*, Amritsar, in April 1906. On the death of his brother 'Aah', Azad was called back by his father to Calcutta. Here, Azad joined the editorial staff of a local weekly called *Daru-s-Sultanat*. The proprietors of this journal, however, were quite conservative in their outlook and they could never see eye to eye with Azad over international affairs or the need of reforming the Muslims. Azad had to leave this journal as well.

In 1904 Azad attended the second annual session of the Muslim Press Conference, held at Lucknow along with the session of the All India Muslim Education Conference. By this time he had become interested in national affairs. In 1908 he went on a foreign tour. Not many details are known of this trip except what Azad himself wrote in *India Wins Freedom*:

"It was during this period that I had an occasion to go out of India and tour in Iraq, Egypt, Syria and Turkey... When I visited Cairo in 1908, the system in Al-Azhar was so defective that it neither trained the mind nor gave adequate knowledge of ancient Islamic science and philosophy. . . From Egypt I went to Turkey and France and had intended to go to London. I could not do so, as I received news that my father was ill. I returned from Paris and did not see London till many years later."

After his father's death, Azad had absolute freedom of thought and action. This however ushered in a period of great mental anguish for him. It seems he also fell in love. There are certain allusions to it though no positive information is available. Maulana Abdur Razak Malihabadi states that once, at his insistence,

Azad did dictate some details of this romantic interlude but took those papers away from him saying that he wanted to revise them. Leave alone revision or amendment, even those original papers were never returned by Azad and his secret remained a secret. In *Tazkira*, however, Maulana Azad uses metaphors to describe this phase of his life:

“Stupor and oblivion cast their spell. Intoxication filled the cups. Youth’s frenzy took me by hand. The path shown by desire and lust was reckoned by the yielding heart to be the one that led to the destination. Wisdom and awareness were at first taken by surprise. Then they too nodded in assent that this was indeed the right path and the right time to enjoy life. As the poet says:

*‘Don’t be offended, O Saki,
At my behaviour
For it is the time of my youth.’*

“Wherever I cast my eyes, I found a city populated by love and adoration, a city full of temples and idols; each temple seeking heads that may bow to it, each idol ravishing one’s heart and reason, so beautiful that one felt compelled to offer it one’s head; each sight of the loved one like a flash of lightning consuming one’s self-respect and self-control; each glance annihilating one’s resistance and fortitude.

*‘Good-bye patience and good-by fortitude
Good-bye reason and good-bye faith.’*

“Whichever path I trod in this city, I was welcomed with chains and snares. In whatever corner I sought refuge, it turned into a prison house for my reason and sanity. There were too many chains for one to count the links. Hundreds of arrows sped at one poor heart. There were innumerable visions of beauty for a single pair of eyes... It is better to confess openly. As the poet says:

*“Yes I proclaim loud and clear
Not for me the secret whispers.”*

“Loose ways ultimately end in licentiousness: loose faith finally leads to heresy. There is no license and no heresy which I was not fated to experience. Indeed it might be said that licentiousness is a perfect example of heresy in action.”

When Azad came under the influence of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, it served to increase his doubts and rationalism. Describing this phase he writes:

“After a few days of agonized thinking, I made up my mind one night and gave up saying my prayers from the next morning. By God, I still remember that night and shall remember it for ever. Considering the intensity of the mental agony packed into those few hours, the night was equal to one year, a decade, even a life-time.”

Describing his recovery from this phase, which continued for 17 months, Azad writes:

“All praise to the Lord, who works in mysterious ways and extends a helping hand towards those who have been led astray. For long had the divine grace been exerting its attraction; it was my own dormant self that held me back. The Divine Vision had long been shining in full splendour; it was my distorted sight that stood in the way of perception. Heaven’s mercy was calling me repeatedly, but its voice was not heeded by my heart in the tumult raised by the senses. The shock of unrequested love opened my eyes, as if into a different world....

“(And then) Every particle spoke. Every leaf was like a letter. Flowers opened their lips. Stones rolled up to point out something. The trodden dust rose and strewed the air with pearls. The skies had to come down often to resolve my queries. The earth had to be tossed up many a time to pluck the stars from the heavens. Angels held me by the arms that I might not falter. The sun came to light my way, that I might not stumble. All the veils were taken off. All the curtains were torn to shreds.”

The poem in prose continues in this vein and finally ends on a soft gentle note:

“Oblivion is after all oblivion. Even lifelong repentance will not atone for a single moment of lapse. Still, when one considers now as to what transpired in the past, one tends to think that, perhaps, like everything else in this life, it was necessary that, perhaps, everything that happened was a pre-determined stage of the journey. Had one not passed through that phase of desire and lust, many facets of truth might have remained hidden. Many a heresy ends in faith, as many a faith ends in heresy.”

These extracts amply bring out the agony which Azad experienced during the year and a half of his loss of faith. When his father died, he could have chosen the easier path of taking over his father's disciples and devotees under his wings and leading a life of ease and comfort. But he was too intelligent to be satisfied with a traditional way of life. Also, perhaps, fate had ordained that he should distinguish himself in other fields. During this period, his faculties had awakened, his learning had matured and his wits had been sharpened by experience. He had developed the capacity to discriminate between right and wrong, and fortune had bestowed upon him infinite perception and insight.

The Muslim League was founded in 1906 in opposition to the National Congress. Sir Syed Ahmad had shaken up the Muslims and had invited them to take to western education so that they did not lag behind the Hindus. But Sir Syed also believed in friendship for, and loyalty to, the Englishman. Maulana Azad realized the full implication of Sir Syed's stand. He was aware of the need of the time and gave top priority to the removal of foreign domination. When he blew the clarion trumpet on June 1, 1912, by releasing the first issue of *Al-Hilal*, Indians in general and Muslims in particular began to awaken from their long and deep slumber. *Al-Hilal's* popularity spread like

forest fire. Within a few weeks its circulation went up to 11,000. Jawaharlal Nehru writes in his *Discovery of India*:

“Soaked in Islamic tradition and with many personal contacts with prominent Muslim leaders and reformers in Egypt, Turkey, Syria, Palestine, Iraq and Iran, he was powerfully affected by political and cultural developments in these countries. Because of his writings he was known in the Islamic countries probably more than any other Indian Muslim... Abul Kalam Azad spoke in a new language to them (Muslims) in his weekly *Al-Hilal*. It was not only a new language in thought and approach, even its texture was different, for Azad’s style was terse and virile though sometimes a little difficult because of its Persian background. The older conservative leaders among Muslims did not react favourably to all this and criticized Azad’s opinions and approach. Yet not even the most learned of them could easily meet Azad in debate and argument. He was a strange mixture of medieval scholasticism, eighteenth century rationalism and the modern outlook. Abul Kalam Azad attacked this strong-hold of conservatism and anti-nationalism not directly but by spreading ideas which undermined the Aligarh tradition. This very youthful writer and journalist caused a sensation in Muslim intellectual circles and, though the elders frowned upon him, his words created a ferment in the minds of the younger generation. (*Discovery of India* – III edition pp. 325-26).

The British Government was always bent upon creating discord among the Indians. The proposed division of Bengal in 1909 was an effort to appease the Muslims by carving out for them a province in which they could have an overwhelming majority. That the move did not succeed in 1909 was due to the unanimous and determined opposition put up by progressive forces. This opposition swelled like a river in spate and all those who resisted it were swept away like straw. The repeal of the proposed division of Bengal was the first big defeat suffered by

the British diplomacy in India. The British were further unnerved by the reaction over the Balkan war and at the Egyptian and Turkish unrest.

The movement against the division of Bengal was led by Aurobindo Ghose. Maulana Azad met him a number of times and was so highly impressed that he began to think in terms of joining the revolutionaries. At that time, the revolutionary movement was dominated by the Hindus. Azad met the famous revolutionary Shyam Sunder Chakravarti, who introduced him to other revolutionaries. At first these revolutionaries did not have full faith in Maulana Azad but later they too became Maulana's devotees. Within two years i.e. by 1908, secret branches of this society were set up, at the instance of Maulana Azad, throughout northern India. When Azad left for Iraq, Egypt, Syria, Turkey and France in 1908, he met the revolutionaries in those countries as well, including the followers of Mustafa Kamal Pasha. On his return he felt that he must communicate with and win over the masses. Accordingly, *Al-Hilal*, was started in 1912, when Azad's mental faculties were at their zenith. The thought that Muslims had been led astray and their so-called leaders had failed to raise them from the depths to which they had fallen was like a thorn in Azad's flesh. He was almost in a frenzy. And his message conveyed this sense of urgency, this despair that there was none to hold up the Muslims, none to explain to them the real teachings of Islam, which lay down that one must wage a constant war against oppression, one must give up one's life for truth and that one must consider slavery a curse. He wrote:

“Oh that I had the Archangel's trumpet so that I could take it up the high peaks of the mountains and blow a blast on it, a blast that could roar like a thunder and shake and awaken those who are still slumbering shamefully. From that height I could have shouted, ‘Wake up, for you have slept too long’. Arise, because your God wants you to arise now. What has happened to you that you look upto this miserable world and do not heed

Him who gives you life, not death; who gives you success not failure, who covers you with honour, not dishonor”.

It was a cry from a heart rent with pain. Azad could not bear the sight of his co-believers lying in the sloughs of depression. He had before him the illustrious example of Jamaluddin Afghani who had waged a furious fight against European imperialism through the pages of his journal *Urvat-ul-Vusqa** and had preached throughout the Middle East that European imperialism was a mischief that must be rooted out. These were the truths and the lessons that Azad communicated fully and frankly. As he said:

“Remember that for every love there is a hate and for every humiliation there must be a pride. If you like good, you have to revile evil, and if you want to please God, you must not be afraid of displeasing Satan.”

Azad contended that one should be ever vigilant. In the words of the poet:

*“A single moment’s carelessness
And the journey was prolonged
By a hundred years.”*

Journalism bears the imprint of the editor. Abdul Halim Sharar and *Dilgudaz*, Mohammad Ali and *Hamdard* and *Comrade*, Niaz Fatehpuri and *Nigar*, Zafar Ali Khan and *Zamindar*, Munshi Gopi Nath and *Akhbar-e-A’am*, Munshi Mahboob Aalam and *Paisa Akhbar* and Maulana Azad and *Al-Hilal* and *Al-Balagh* are typical examples. These journals were so closely identified with their editors that one can but consider the journal an expression of the editor’s character and personality, his literary skill and his ideals.

Al-Hilal brought with it new ideas, new trends and new teachings. It was so comprehensive that it is difficult to describe

*An Arabic journal published from Paris.

it either as literary or political or religious. As Dr. K.A. Faruqi says:

“There is a great difference between journalism and literature. A journalist is governed by momentary considerations, by a sense of hurry and lack of time. Hence he can't devote time to his writings. It lies to Azad's credit that he has demolished the barriers between journalism and creative literature. In *Al-hilal* and *Al-balagh* we find commentary on Ghalib and Omar Khayyam as well as on the Balkan War. He has written about the ups and downs in Rangoon, the revolution in Tripoli, the activities of Nadva and Aligarh and the conflict between the Congress and the Muslim League. But the revolutionary fervor is evident every where. He reiterates the need to awaken and strengthen faith in order to shake off the shackles of slavery through this resurgent force. But he discusses these issues in such a manner that they lose their momentary significance and acquire timelessness.”

Maulana Mahmudul Hasan declared that Azad had shown the right way. Maulana Mohammad Ali welcomed *Al-Hilal*, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Hasrat Mohani became its fans. Maulana Husain Ahmad confessed it had found a niche in his heart. Dr. Zakir Husain averred that *Al-Hilal* kindled a spark in his heart which developed into a flame that sustained him throughout his life and inspired all his endeavours.

It was not only Azad's literary style that made him great. His teachings and his message were also profound. He taught that one should rise above hunger and starvation. He gave a clarion call to his fellow Muslims that they should join forces with the Hindus and should not lag behind them in the struggle to put an end to foreign domination, for Islam holds slavery as death. He declared that if the Indian Muslims ignored their duty and were left behind in the fight for independence, they would never be forgiven. Muslims, he said, were not created for despondency but for hope. It is narrated that once Ali was asked, “What would happen if God becomes visible to you in all

His glory”. Said Ali, “My faith in God would not increase even by the least degree.”

Naturally, if one’s faith is already perfect, it suffers no decline nor increases a joy. Azad’s ideal of faith was of a similar nature. He says:

“Even if all the bolts of lightning descend from heaven, even if all the peaks of the mighty Himalayas arrange themselves in battle array, true faith cannot be shaken, even for a moment.”

It was due to this perfect faith that *Al-hilal* offered stubborn opposition to the communal politics of the Muslim League. *Al-Hilal*’s bold lead had its effect and a section of the educated Muslims disassociated itself from the Muslim League. As a result, the League had to change its policy and it came nearer to the Congress viewpoint. In 1916, the Congress and the Muslim League came very close to each other. Of course along with *Al-Hilal*, Maulana Mohammad Ali’s journal *Comrade* was also responsible to a great extent for this rapprochement.

When the First World War started, the Government began to worry about Maulana Azad. It may be remembered that at one time Azad had consorted with the Bengali revolutionaries though he had been soon won over by the democratic ways of the Congress. The Government was closely watching his every move. In November, *Al-Hilal* was suppressed under the Press Act and Maulana Azad had to close it down. In 1916, he issued the *Al-Balagh*, which too had the thundering tone of *Al-Hilal*. Warning the Muslims against the Anglophilia of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Maulana Azad wrote:

“These people have carved out a new idol for their adoration and they have named it ‘Sir Syed’s policy’. In Greek mythology there used to be an idol for each type of power. Thus the god of preservation could not meddle with the affairs of the god of learning. Nor could Cupid interfere in the kingdom of Venus. But these followers of Sir Syed

have evolved a multifaceted god whose powers are so comprehensive that no facet of knowledge or action is without his jurisdiction.”

Azad loved freedom. It was reflected in his religious views. It was ingrained in his character. The two persons who influenced him most were Jamaluddin Afghani and Sheikh Mohammad Abdu. Afghani was born in 1838 at Sadabad in Afghanistan. In 1857, he passed through India, while on his way to Hedjaz. He returned home in 1861 and played an important role in Afghan politics. Soon, however, he got fed up with the internecine war of the Afghans and spent the next ten years in Egypt and Turkey preaching freedom of thought and urging the Muslim countries to unite against the western imperialism. The English forced him out of Egypt in 1879. He returned to India and visited Hyderabad Deccan and Calcutta. Later however he landed in Paris which at that time was a haven for political exiles. In March 1883, he issued the *Urvat-ul Vusqa* an Arabic journal, from Paris. Through this journal he exposed the backwardness of the eastern countries and the unfair way the western countries had exploited them. His words were caustic, his style aggressive.

It was this message and style that inspired and reinforced Azad's love of freedom.

Qachar, the king of Iran, invited Afghani to visit his country. This was followed by an invitation from Sultan Abdul Hameed of Turkey. But he could not get on smoothly with kings and potentates and was put under detention in Istanbul where he died on March 9, 1898 while still under detention. Azad was nine years old at that time.

When Afghani was in Calcutta, he must have created quite a stir in the Islamic circles and Azad must have heard quite a lot about them. It is therefore quite probable that Afghani made a lasting impression on young Azad's mind. In this context it is not surprising that the very first issue of *Al-Hilal* carried photographs of Jamaluddin Afghani and Mohammad Abdu. *Al-Hilal's*

style too was influenced by *Urvat-ul-Vusqa*. It had the same force and fire, the same biting tone.

The first issue of *Al-Hilal* was dated July 13, 1912 and the last one, November 18, 1914. It was reissued under the name of *Al-Balagh* on November 12, 1915 and closed down on April 3, 1916. Eleven years later, *Al-Hilal* was reissued under its own name in June 1927, but it survived only till December 1927. This was but a shadow of the previous *Al-Hilal* and Azad had by this time become too deeply involved in politics and had little time to act as the moving spirit behind the paper.

Al-Hilal's editorial board included Khwaja Abdul Wahid Kanpuri, Syed Sulaiman Nadvi, Maulana Abdullah Emadi, Maulana Abdus Salam Nadvi and Maulana Hamid Ali Siddiqui.

Azad tried his utmost to prolong the life of *Al-Balagh* but circumstances were against him. The Government of Bengal externed him from Bengal so he went to Ranchi. In a letter to Syed Sulaiman Nadvi he wrote:

“For the present, I am in Ranchi. If you can’t do anything else, at least send me an article every fortnight to fill in eight columns of *Al-Balagh*. Please ask Maulvi Abdus Salam to do the same every fortnight. These two articles will suffice for two formats. I shall write up for the remaining three formats. Please convey to Abdus Salam that he may either accept a remuneration or give his articles *gratis*. I am agreeable to either alternative. Please help me in this manner for the first few issues. You know already the topics covered in *Al-Balagh* - essays, interviews, articles on the Prophet’s way of life, learned discussions, criticism, history etc. You also know the objectives of *Al-Balagh*. I shall continue to write the commentary on the Holy Quran”.

But despite these desperate measures *Al-Balagh* could not survive long.

When *Al-Hilal* was reissued in 1927, its editorial board included Ghulam Ahmad Jamai, Chiragh Hasan Hasrat and Maulana

Abdur Razzak Malihabadi. As mentioned earlier, Maulana Azad had already become too deeply involved in politics. Recapitulating the events of his life during 1915 and 1921. Maulana Azad wrote in an article entitled *Hikayaat-e-Burq-o-Khirman* (The story of the Lightning and the Hay):

“A life of learning is so different from a life of politics that the two can never meet. Among the difficulties I faced in life, the very first one was that I tried to continue my pursuit of learning and my interest in politics at the same place and time.”

Elsewhere, Azad wrote:

“At the age of 24, when other people commence the intoxicating journey of pleasurable youth, I had finished my wanderings in the wilderness and was picking out the thorns from my blistered feet. Thus even in this respect I was contrary to the usual run of things. At that stage of life when people gird up their loins for action, I was putting off my belt.”

Al-Hilal heralded a new era in Urdu literature. It was supplemented by Zafar Ali Khan's *Zamindar* and Maulana Mohammad Ali's *Hamdard* and these three journals shone like brilliant stars on the horizon of Urdu journalism. *Al-Hilal* urged the Muslims to reform themselves. The far-sighted editor explained to them patiently and repeatedly that if they did not change their existing ways of life they would be completely wiped out. Azad raised the slogan of truth and justice and he succeeded in turning the tide of Indian politics towards the goal of freedom and independence. He blew the trumpets of war and impressed upon his readers that it was better to die than to grovel under the heels of imperialism. He proclaimed as if with beat of drums, that each religion taught truth and justice and Islam did not teach one to bear ill-will for any religion. On the other hand, Islam taught that slavery is a curse which should be wiped out through the combined efforts of all, that it would end only when every Indian proclaims himself to be an Indian.

During the first phase of *Al-Hilal* publication when Azad was trying to rouse the Muslims, some of his writings could only be read as it flowed from his pen:

“Whatever has to happen will happen and no inauspicious group of persons can stop it. It is certain that a day will come when a political revolution would have taken place in India and the bonds of slavery which the country had put on of its own accord would have been slashed by the winds of freedom sweeping through the twentieth century. At that time, after this would have happened, suppose a history of India were to be written. Do you realize what would be written about a group of 70 million persons? It would be inscribed that there was an unfortunate and ill-fated community which always served as an obstacle in the way of the country’s progress, a blight for the country’s cause, a stumbling block in the way to freedom, a plaything in the hands of the covetous rulers, a pack of cards for the pleasure of the foreigners, a grievous scar on the brow of India and a piece of stone in the hands of the Government with which it tried to crush the aspirations of the country. It will be written that there was a herd of pitiable bewitched humans that had been turned into animals by some old high-priest, animals that were led by the nose by their masters who made them dance to their tunes, animals who betrayed all human will, or mind or motion, in short, not the slightest evidence of having any human qualities, for they could neither think with their own minds nor speak with their own voice. If you fondly hope that there will be glorious chapter about yourself in the history of the country, would you permit me to read it out to you. No doubt there will be a chapter which will say that India did forge ahead towards the goal of freedom and progress and the Hindus did pay with their lives for it. But when the bugle was blown on the battlefield the Muslims went and hid themselves in the caves. When the Hindus called them, the Muslims sealed their lips. When the country was smarting under unjust laws, it was the Hindus

who carried on a crusade and the brave Muslims not only refrained from jumping into fray but shrieked like demented persons that those who had joined the struggle were rebels.

“The future historian will write that ultimately whatever had to be, did happen. No nation could remain a slave during the twentieth century and none did remain so. But the world will remember that whatever happened rebounded to the credit of any community but the Muslim.”

The above extract proves how the prophetic vision of Azad could foresee the coming events of history with great perspicacity. The spirit of Afghani seemed to dance through his words. His style was like the Archangel's trumpet. His heart was full of molten lava. No wonder the Government could not let this inspired journalist enjoy freedom of action.

On March 22, 1916 using its powers under clause 3 of the Defence of India Act, the Government of Bengal asked Maulana Azad to leave the territory of Bengal within a week. On March 30, Azad left Calcutta for Ranchi. A large crowd of friends and relatives wanted to accompany him but he preferred to go it alone. The underlying idea, Maulana Azad explained, was to get used to isolation and self-dependence, so that it could come in handy in later life.

At Ranchi, he settled near a village called Morhabadi. The area was populated by the tribals called Kol, Oraon and Munda who were barely literate or civilized as judged by modern standards. They had naturally no idea of Maulana Azad's learning or scholarship. As he quotes:

*“What a place have I selected to live,
after being rendered homeless”.*

Apart from the tribals, a few Bengalis had built bungalows in the village where they came to live during summer. One of these bungallows, located on a small hillock, belonged to Rabindra Nath Tagore. Commenting on his isolation, Azad wrote:

“Almighty God works in mysterious ways. For long had I yearned for peace of heart and freedom of thought and action but the pressure of work and the entanglements of relationships never permitted this to happen so far. I have it now. The world thinks I have been exiled and interned but I am happy to obtain at length the treasure of solitude and isolation.”

Although during the month of Ramazan, Azad was deprived of the bliss of the congregational prayers, and the pleasure of listening to the night-long recitations of the holy Quran, nevertheless he enjoyed the company of his own thoughts, which proved to be so pleasant that he grew indifferent to the pleasure of company. He devoted himself to writing from dawn to dusk, with no sound to disturb him, so sight to distract him.

Meanwhile his friends and sympathizers were busy trying to get the externment order revoked. A memorial was issued under 60,000 signatures and even Lord Michael confessed during an interview that the misunderstandings had been removed and gave the assurance that Maulana Azad would be released soon. But this was no more than a temporary palliative and Azad continued to enjoy the opportunity of making valuable contributions to literature, history and theology.

The place where Azad stayed was at some distance from the town of Ranchi. One Friday during the month of Ramazan, Azad went to the town for the congregational prayers. There was not much of a crowd, only a few rows of the faithful, who pressed Maulana Azad to lead the prayers and preach the sermon. As he describes it:

‘I was forced to deliver the sermon. These persons had never heard a real Friday sermon. They thought a sermon meant only recitation of some Arabic prayers. Ranchi has a large population of Muslims who being located in this obscure corner of the country, are living in abject poverty and misery. Since the Friday prayers, I am conscious of a call to serve the community. If I had to stay here long, I think I would start my

work among them. The world has seen what manner of work I could do while I was free and unfettered. Let it see what I can accomplish during the detention and imprisonment, for the real challenge and the real test is here and now. As the poet says:

*“Now will be known whose love is true
And whose false,
Because now you have decided
To test us all.”*

It was at Ranchi that Maulana Azad heard about the arrest of Maulvi Mohiuddin Kasuri. The news saddened him because he was convinced that Mohiuddin had committed no crime except that he was acquainted with Azad. Indeed, during those days, to be Azad's friend inevitably attracted official wrath. Azad has quoted a Persian couplet to describe this condition:

*“O my companions, avoid my fire,
Those who become my fellow travelers
are their own enemies.”*

One of Azad's friends, Fazluddin Ahmad, who used to visit him at Ranchi deserves general gratitude for persuading Maulana Azad to write the *Tazkira*, a priceless book. Not only did he make Azad write but with forethought he used to collect and keep in his custody the chapters of the book as soon as they were written. Later, Maulana Azad tried to get the manuscript back promising to revise and return it as soon as he had time. But Fazluddin Ahmad was not only Azad's friend, he was also the publisher and manager of *Al-Hilal* and *Al-Balagh* and thus had an intimate knowledge of how Maulana Azad's mind worked. So he kept quiet and never returned the manuscript, thus making its publication possible.

The way Maulana Azad wrote his commentary on the Quran is an epic by itself. As soon as he got some time, he devoted himself to this task. Meanwhile there was widespread oppression in this country. Indian soldiers were being ordered to bombard the sacred place of Muslims in Iraq and Arabia. Muslim

leaders were being imprisoned in India. While Maulan Azad was interned at Ranchi under the Central Government's order Maulana Zafar Ali Khan and Maulana Mohammad Ali were interned at Karamabad and Chhindwara respectively. As for the impression this detention made on these leaders, it can best be conveyed in the words of the poet:

*“What O Saki did thou do to alleviate
my intoxication,
I feel even more drunk.”*

The dedication of *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* dated December 12, 1931 contains an interesting episode. Writes Azad:

“It was perhaps December 1918. I was interned at Ranchi. Once, while returning from the mosque after my evening prayers, I felt as if somebody was following me and turned round to discover a person cloaked in a blanket:

‘Do you have any business with me,’ I asked.

‘Yes sir, I came from afar.’

‘Where is your home?’

‘Across the border.’

‘When did you reach here?’

‘This evening. I am a very poor man. I walked all the way from Kandhar to Quetta. There I met some merchants of my own country who employed me as their servant and I was able to reach Agra with them. From Agra again I have come on foot.’

‘I am indeed sorry to hear this. But why did you take all this trouble?’

‘Because some passages in the Quran are beyond my comprehension and I wanted to learn them from you. I have read each word of *Al-Hilal* and *Al-Balagh*.’

“This gentleman stayed with me for a few days and then suddenly disappeared. He left without taking my leave because he feared that I might press him to accept the expenses for his return journey and he did not want me to take up this burden. I am sure he must have traversed the major part of

his return journey on foot. I do not recollect his name. I do not know if he is alive or dead. But, if my memory had not failed me, I would have dedicated this book to him.”

Maulana Azad had completed the translation of eight chapters of the Quran before he was externed from Calcutta. The police searched his house and took away all his books and papers. Fifteen days later the papers were returned to him. But the Central Government did not agree with the decision of the Provincial Government. A special officer, one Sir Charles Cleveland, was deputed to investigate. He first did his investigation at Calcutta and then went down to Ranchi where another search was undertaken and the translation and the commentary on the Quran were confiscated. When these papers were taken away the second time, Maulana Azad felt depressed but he did not lose heart and recommenced his translation from the ninth chapter of the Quran. He pleaded with the Government repeatedly that the translation and commentary of the first eight chapters should be restored to him, but the stock reply was that the papers could not be returned for the present, nor could it be foreseen as to when they could be returned. When apparently there was no hope of their restoration and Maulana Azad began to sense that the future would in any case be full of struggle and conflict, leaving little time for this work, he started the translation and the commentary anew from the very first chapter. Maulana Azad's heartache can be guessed by the author whose manuscript is lost, or by the poet whose works are stolen or by the painter whose painting is destroyed. And he deserves our highest admiration for the courage and fortitude with which he resolved to recreate his work despite his solitude and lack of amenities. He has confessed that it went against the grain to rewrite something one has already written. Even so Azad did manage to complete the job.

To continue the story of *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, while at Ranchi, Azad had decided to get the manuscript printed in Urdu type. After his release, however, he thought that it would be more

suitable to have the book calligraphed. While this was being done Azad became involved in the Non-cooperation Movement. In 1921, when he was arrested again, his house was searched for the third time. The ignorant functionaries collected all the papers haphazardly and took them away. Having served his term of imprisonment, Azad did receive the papers back after protracted correspondence. But these papers were completely disarranged and many portions were missing. This hurt Azad's feelings deeply. For long whenever he tried to finish this job, he used to grow exasperated and dejected and felt unable to proceed further. At last in 1926, it seemed as if all the blocks were removed from his mind and his heart and he once again concentrated on this work. It was however not the same thing as at Ranchi when he had all the time to himself for by then the national politics had claimed him. Consequently, it was only in 1930 that he was able to finish this work. The achievement rivals that of Carlyle who also rewrote from memory the whole of his book *The French Revolution* after having lost the original manuscript.

Political Career and Ranchi

THE INTERNMENT ORDER of Maulana Azad was withdrawn in January 1920. He went back direct from Ranchi to Calcutta. While he was in detention, the Rowlatt Act had been passed, the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre had been perpetrated in Amritsar by General O'Dwyer and his troops, and most of the national leaders had been arrested. At the end of his detention, Azad had intended to resume his literary activities. However, man proposes and God disposes. Maulana Azad had to plunge into active politics and it was not in his nature to hold back. In 1921, he issued the weekly *Paigham* from Calcutta and explained his feelings in the following words:

“Towards the end of 1918, when the world of my dreams had already been destroyed and the turbulent events had swept off the remains of my world, I was sitting in a secluded corner in Ranchi and dreaming about building up a new world of hope. While others had heard only the sound of a door being closed. I could hear the sound of a new door being opened. As the poet says:

*The difference between you and me is only this,
The noise you hear of a door being closed
I hear as the door being opened.*

“It was the first week of the month of Ramazan in 1912 when during those refulgent nights, I traced new lines on the chart of my aspirations, having torn into pieces the previous charts :

*Look at my courage that hundreds of pages of
my hopes
I have torn into hundreds of pieces
And then washed them clear
Through my tears.*

“When I was released in January 1920 from the secluded corner in which I had been interned, I had before me the programme I had evolved two years earlier. Hence I did not have to wait upon the course of events, nor was there any need of further deliberation. I had only to put it into action. One of the programmes that I wanted to carry out was to return to some secluded place with a group of companions and disciples and start teaching and writing. Apart from this, the party activities that I had in view also did not involve mobility. Rather they required permanent stay in one place. Accordingly, on my release, I went straight to Calcutta and although I was being invited to attend innumerable meetings throughout the country to felicitate those who had been released from imprisonment, I begged to be excused because my nature and my purpose in life did not allow me to make my person an object of peoples’ demand and favour. And yet (as the Arabic saying goes) I realized the existence of God when, time and again, what I proposed came to naught. Hence I had to plunge into the flood. Praise be to the Lord, however, that this flood was not the course of events opposed to my way of life, that would have crippled my intentions and demolished my structures. On the contrary, it was a torrent in consonance with my will and intent, a torrent in which I could hear the voice of the Heavens, calling man to accept God’s will instead of his own. Till January 1920, I tried my best to participate in the movement in such a manner that I might adhere to the decided line of action and keep away from activities involving tours and movements. But the criticality of affairs, the undeniable calls made by the cause and the dearth of suitable persons forced me to change my ways. . .”

Accordingly, from January 1920 onwards, for the next 18 months, Maulana Azad was continuously occupied with touring the country and with the affairs of the struggle for independence. All other engagements were postponed and from that point of time his whole life was spent in resolving national and political problems. Organizational matters of the Congress, drafting of new programmes, addresses and seminars, discussions with Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders, occasional imprisonment, together claimed a large chunk of his time. He was adept in providing solutions to intricate problems. This brought him nearer to Gandhiji.

Maulana Azad always regretted that there was no institutional arrangement for imparting instruction and training to the Congress volunteers which he considered essential for establishing and consolidating a movement. He Wrote:

“In fact, if *Al-Hilal* and *Al-Balagh* were needed when it was time to sow the seeds, they were needed even more now for watering and nurturing the seeds.”

It was this consideration which prompted him to issue the weekly *Paigham*. But this, too, soon folded up. As Azad could not devote much time to it, this lifeless paper could not drag on. The first issue was released on September 23, 1921 and the last one on December 16, 1921.

During the First World War, the Indians spared neither money nor blood for their English rulers. Thousands of lives were lost. But they were rewarded in the shape of the notorious Rowlatt Act. When they protested they were subjected to brutal treatment. Hundreds of innocent persons were massacred in Amritsar. The sacred places of the Muslims were desecrated. The Indian Muslims also felt hurt at the perfidy and vindictiveness of the English and their allies in deciding to abolish the Caliphate in Turkey. A delegation of the Indian Muslims met the Viceroy in this connection. Another delegation went to England but both were given cold reception and nothing could be done.

Along with Maulana Mohammad Ali and other Muslim leaders, Maulana Azad joined the fray, with his brilliant oratory, mature views and a personality that could rock society to the core and enflame peoples' minds. Although the youngest among these leaders, they acknowledged his sagacity and grasp of events.

When Gandhiji launched his Non-cooperation Movement, Azad became his right hand man. The Muslims soon realized that Azad was showing them the straight path, *i.e.*, that they should join the Congress even to solve the Khilafat problem, they too flocked to the Congress in large numbers and thus the Khilafat Movement merged with the Congress Movement.

After his release from Ranchi, Azad met Gandhiji on January 18, 1920 at a meeting of Hindu and Muslim leaders held to consider the feasibility of sending a delegation to the Viceroy to express the concern of the people at the injustice meted out to Turkey. Maulana Azad signed the petition along with others, reluctantly, for he knew it would serve no useful purpose. He was also persuaded by Maulana Mohammad Ali and others to join the delegation but the result was as foreseen by Azad, thereby confirming his political insight and enhancing his reputation.

It was later decided that another delegation should be sent to England to represent the case before the British Government. Maulana Azad was more concerned with the issue whether a delegation was sufficient or some other means should also be adopted. Despite a six-hour discussion held at the residence of Hakim Ajmal Khan in Delhi, no decision could be arrived at. Then Mahatma Gandhi suggested that a sub-committee comprising Maulana Azad and Hakim Ajmal Khan could discuss this issue further with him. This was agreed to and they met at the residence of Principal Rudra of St. Stephen's College, Delhi, whereupon Mahatma Gandhi explained in detail his concept of the Non-cooperation Movement. Maulana Azad found it just the thing he was searching for and Hakim Ajmal Khan also readily agreed to it.

The Khilafat Conference was at that time holding its session at Meerut. Maulana Azad and Mahatma Gandhi attended the session and the Non-cooperation Movement was made known to the people for the first time from the platform of this conference. Later, in another session of the Khilafat Conference held at Calcutta under his presidentship, Maulana Azad urged the Muslims to adopt the Non-cooperation Movement.

The National Congress held a special session at Calcutta and its annual session at Nagpur. The Calcutta session was held under the presidentship of Lala Lajpat Rai and, as the ground had already been prepared, the resolution of Non-cooperation Movement was adopted by an overwhelming majority. This was confirmed again at the Nagpur session.

Subsequent events were indeed stirring. The whole country was in ferment. Meetings were held. Processions were taken out. Gandhiji and Azad, the Ali Brothers, Deshbandhu C.R. Das, Pandit Motilal Nehru and Jawaharlal Nehru relentlessly toured the provinces and addressed lakhs of people. The country was roused to such an extent that before August 1, 1921, ten million rupees had been subscribed to the Swaraj Fund which, by the standards at that time, was a very large amount. Boys and girls left their schools and colleges to join the Non-cooperation Movement. Many lawyers gave up their practices to serve the cause. Among them were Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru, Deshbandhu C.R. Das, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Rajaji who used to earn thousands of rupees per year. Innumerable women came out to join the processions. They also filled the begging bowl of Mahatma Gandhi with their ornaments and jewellery.

During those days Maulana Azad spent most of his time in the company of Mahatma Gandhi and this cemented the mutual affection and rapport between them. Gandhiji was a good judge of men. He instantly recognized Azad's intellect

and insight, his regard for truth and far-sightedness. The cordial relations between the two continued throughout their lives. The Congress session of December 1920 held at Nagpur has already been mentioned earlier. Deshbandhu C.R. Das and Lala Lajpat Rai who, to begin with, were not in favour of Non-cooperation, became converts to the Movement during the session. Mohammad Ali Jinnah, however, left the Congress when the Congress took to Non-cooperation.

At this time Maulana Azad's popularity was at its zenith. A gathering of about 1,000 Muslim *maulvis* and scholars met in Lahore and decided that Azad should henceforth be named as 'Imam-ul-Hind' (The Leader of India). Even the orthodox priests of Deoband and Delhi pressed Maulana Azad to accept the honorific. But Azad was quite modest. He pleaded that he was not worthy of the great honour. Meanwhile he was arrested. In 1923, on his release, he had to face the same problem as the offer was repeated. Then he wrote to the Jamiatul Ulema (the organ of the Muslim priests) with sweet reasonable words that to make such an offer to any scholar or religious leader, however great he might be, was not free from risks. The incident illustrates Maulana Azad's humility and insight.

Towards the end of 1921, the government started arresting Indian leaders indiscriminately. Maulana Mohammad Ali was arrested first while he was touring with Mahatma Gandhi. There was a wave of protests throughout the country. The Khilafat Conference had earlier passed a resolution under the signature of national leaders including Maulana Mohammad Ali, Maulana Shaukat Ali, Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani, Dr. Kitchlew, Pir Ghulam Mujaddid and Jagatguru Shankaracharya declaring that service in the English army and police was irreligious. A manifesto was now published in support of this resolution under the signatures of Mahatma Gandhi and Maulana Azad. The unrest spread like wild fire. Meetings were held at every nook and corner of the country. The

government declared 'Congress Volunteers' an illegal body which provoked people, who flocked together to court arrest. Azad was arrested in Calcutta on December 10, 1921. On the eve of his arrest, he left a message for Mahatma Gandhi.

In another message to the people of India, particularly the Muslims, Maulana Azad said:

“The faithful should neither worry nor grieve. They should rest assured that if they have true faith they will be victorious over all. Our victory depends on four truths. These are: perfect unity among Muslims and Hindus, peace, discipline and sustained sacrifice, and I invite the whole country to adopt them. I shall specially plead with my Muslim brethren to remember that it is a privilege to be a Muslim. Hence they should set an example to others in this hour of test and tribulation. If for any reason they happen to lag behind others, they would leave a permanent stigma of shame and dishonor on the fair name of the 400 million Muslims of the world.”

The way he was arrested would bear description. On December 10, at about 4.30 p.m., Mr. Goldie, Deputy Commissioner, Special Branch arrived at his residence accompanied by an European Inspector of Police. Maulana Azad was in his study on the first floor dictating to Mr. Fazluddin Ahmad replies to letters. He invited the Deputy Commissioner to come over to the study and looked askance at him. The Deputy Commissioner said, “Will you please come along with us”, Mr. Ahmad enquired: “Do you have a warrant?” The Deputy Commissioner answered in the negative but Maulana Azad was quite willing to accompany him. He got ready within five minutes. The Inspector said there was no hurry and that he could take the things he would need. But Azad took nothing except a warm shawl. All this happened so quietly that nobody knew of this arrest. It was thus in contrast to the previous arrest when a great show of strength was made by the police before his interment in Ranchi. At first Maulana Azad was taken to the police

Commissioner's office. About 20 minutes later Deshbandhu C.R. Das was also brought in. then both of them were taken to the Presidency Jail in Alipore and locked in separate rooms in the European ward. Maulana Azad stated that he felt as if a great load had been taken off his shoulders and he slept soundly for the first time in two years. The government was making such arrests throughout the country as a precautionary measure because of the impending visit of the Prince of Wales. The government was keen to put up a show of imperial strength and majesty on that occasion with the help of the Rajas, the Nawabs and the loyal capitalists. The Congress had already decided to boycott the visit and had started recruiting volunteers. The government had declared the Volunteers an unlawful body. Still the movement spread throughout the country and the government retaliated with arrests. In Calcutta, the names of Azad and C.R. Das topped the list. C.R. Das had prepared an inspiring message in anticipation of his arrest. He declared:

"I am already feeling the fetters on my hand and the weight of the iron chains over my body. The whole country is like a big jail. The Congress programme will continue uninterrupted whether I am inside the jail or outside. It does not matter whether I live or die, it will not affect our struggle."

The message thrilled the country. Wherever the Prince of Wales went, he encountered complete boycott. Except for a handful of the everlastingly loyal and faithful persons, no one greeted him. Calcutta was indignant at the arrest of Maulana Azad and C.R. Das. People wanted to give vent to their passion but they obeyed Maulana's directive to maintain peace.

The case was conducted at a leisurely pace. At last Maulana Azad was sentenced to 12 months' imprisonment. C.R. Das was sentenced 6 months. Like a true satyagrahi, Maulana Azad did not take part in the proceedings of the case but he submitted a written statement entitled *Qaul-e-faisal*, viz, 'The Final Verdict', which is of historic significance. Commenting

on it in his *Young India*, Mahatma Gandhi described it as the most forceful, the most truthful and the most courageous statement offered by a satyagrahi (please see extracts in the appendix). Concluding the statement, Maulana Azad declared:

“Mr. Magistrate, I shall take no more time of the court. It is an interesting, in fact, amazing chapter of history which we both are writing today. To my lot has fallen the accused’s dock, to your lot the magistrate’s chair. I concede that for this job your chair is essential as my dock. Come, let us quickly finish this job which will become a memorable legend. The historian is attending us and the future has been long waiting us. Please hurry up with your judgment so that I may revisit this place again and again. Let this process continue for some time till the doors of another court are flung open. That would be the court of the Divine Law. Time would be the judge between us and the judgment written by it would be final and irrevocable.”

On the eve of the judgment day, on February 9, 1922 Maulana Azad sent a message to people of Calcutta asking them to desist from hartal or demonstrations. Accordingly, on his conviction people had to contain their grief and resentment. On hearing the sentence, Maulana Azad told the magistrate with a smile, “The sentence is too light, much below my expectations.” With this fearless and outspoken statement, Maulana Azad went to jail so casually as if he was going to visit the Congress office.

When the sentence was announced, Begum Azad sent a telegram to Mahatma Gandhi at his Ahmedabad and Bardoli addresses. But the Central Telegraph Office at Calcutta did not transmit the message. The text of the wire was:

“The court announced its decision today in the case of my husband, Maulana Azad. He has received a sentence of only one year’s imprisonment. This is noticeably less than what we were prepared for. If sentence and imprisonment are a reward for

serving the nation, you will agree that injustice has been done to him in this respect, for the sentence is even less than the least that he deserved. I would like to inform you that for the vacancy that has been caused through his absence in Bengal, I have offered my unworthy services. All the tasks that he used to do will be performed in the same manner as they were done during his presence. This is a heavy responsibility for me. But I have full faith in God that He would enable me to perform it. His place however was not in Bengal alone. He belonged to the whole country. But of course it is beyond me to fill that vacuum created by his absence at the national level. I have tested myself during the four years he was interned and I am confident that I shall pass even the second test, despite the fact that during the last five years my health has been deteriorating and I am no longer capable of mental strain. That is why despite my great desire to serve the country, Maulana Azad had always deterred me from undertaking any strenuous task. But I had resolved that after my husband's imprisonment I will devote my worthless person to the performance of his duty. From today I shall perform all the tasks of the Bengal Provincial Khilafat Committee, with the assistance of my brother who has asked me to convey to you his loving and respectful greetings, along with the message that at present none of the parties, i.e. neither the government nor the country is in a position to take a decision or make a compromise. Hence the only task before us is to prepare ourselves for any eventuality. Bengal will continue to lead the way in the future, as she is doing at present."

When the Non-cooperation Movement was at its height and Lala Lajpat Rai, Pandit Motilal Nehru, C.R. Das and Maulana Azad were in jail, the annual session of the Congress was held at Ahmedabad under the presidentship of Hakim Ajmal Khan. The hope held out by Mahatma Gandhi during the previous session at Nagpur that the country would achieve independence through non-cooperation within a year had not

materialised and about 25,000 satyagrahis had been jailed. Even so, the Ahmedabad session reiterated its full faith in Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent non-cooperation. Thereafter Mahatma Gandhi informed the government about his intention to start civil disobedience at Bardoli. He even wrote to the Viceroy about this but the Viceroy took no notice of it. Preparations were also afoot in the Guntur district of Madras (now in Andhra Pradesh) for launching a campaign for non-payment of taxes and a general enthusiasm pervaded the country when news came of a sudden violent incident at Chauri Chaura in U.P. which shocked Gandhiji. The police had fired at a peaceful crowd which then went out of control and raided and burnt a police post. Some policemen were also burnt in the fire. Some other violent incidents also occurred. Mahatma Gandhi's feelings were hurt. He called a meeting of those members of the Congress Working Committee who were outside the prison and decided to suspend the agitation. Some other members, who were inside the prison, did not agree with this view and a meeting of the All India Congress Committee was called in Delhi. Communal leaders like Dr. Moonje tried to move a non-confidence motion against Mahatma Gandhi but it fell through for lack of support.

Believing that the movement had failed and its leaders had become disheartened, the Government administered the *coup de grace* in 1922 by arresting Mahatma Gandhi in Sabarmati on the charge of writing some objectionable articles in his *Young India*. Mahatma Gandhi readily confessed his so-called crime with courage and conviction, as Maulana Azad had done earlier. The Magistrate and Mahatma Gandhi treated each other with utmost courtesy. The Magistrate thanked Mahatma Gandhi for having made his task easier by his confession. Saying, almost with a trace of regret, that the law is no respecter of persons, he sentenced Mahatma Gandhi to six years of imprisonment. In his judgment, he equated Gandhi with Lokmanya Tilak who also had been sentenced for six years. After he had been in prison for two years, Mahatma Gandhi was operated upon

by Dr. Col. Maddock. The doctor gave the option to Mahatma Gandhi to call in a doctor of his own choice but he expressed perfect faith in Col. Maddock. The operation was successful and Mahatma Gandhi was released on February 5, 1924 in view of intense popular demand for his release.

In December 1924 an open session of the Indian National Congress was held. There was a bitter dispute between those in favour of seeking election to the Councils and those opposing it. The decision to continue the non-violent Non-cooperation Movement resulted in a split in the Congress and the creation of the Swaraj Party under the leadership of C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru. In September 1923, a special session of the Congress was held in Delhi under the presidentship of Maulana Azad. That Azad was accorded this honour at the tender age of 35, in preference to much more experienced, tried and senior leaders in the Congress was a tribute to his sagacity and insight in affairs and illustrates the high esteem in which he was held. The country was passing through a critical phase. There was not only disintegration within the Congress, but various issues like cow-sacrifice, *Shuddhi* (conversion of non-Hindus to Hinduism), *Tabligh* (conversion of non-Muslims to Islam) and various other problems were also besetting the country and communal forces were rampant, being aided and abetted by the imperialist government. Maulana Azad made a frontal attack on the communalists in the presidential address. He said:

“Today India needs neither the Hindu communal force nor the Muslim communal force. We need only one force, that of the Indian National Congress.”

The stand was not new for Azad. He had been giving the same message since 1911. He continued in these ringing words:

“If an angel descends from heavens today and proclaims from the Qutb Minar that India can attain Swaraj within 24 hours provided I relinquish my demand for Hindu-Muslim unity, I shall retort to it : No my friend, I shall give up Swaraj, but not Hindu-Muslim unity, for if Swaraj is delayed, it will

be a loss for India only but if Hindu-Muslim unity is lost it will be loss for the whole of mankind.”

It was a timely reminder, for Azad had found after his release that Hindus and Muslims had drifted apart. There were riots and terrible happenings in Kohat. The national leaders were most anxious and Mahatma Gandhi announced a 21 day fast. Hindu and Muslim leaders hastened to reassure him that they would resolve the differences between the parties concerned. A unity conference was held on September 26, 1924 which passed a resolution creating a National Panchayat Board to solve the problem. But the fast continued.

An All-Party Conference was held in Delhi on January 22, 1925, under the presidentship of Mahatma Gandhi, which set up a 40 member sub-committee to establish Hindu-Muslim unity. At first the leaders were refused permission to visit Kohat. When permission was finally given, Mahatma Gandhi visited the place along with Maulana Shaukat Ali. This visit marked the parting of the ways between the two leaders. Maulana Azad, however, continued to give the lead to both Hindu and Muslim leaders. The Investigation Committee for Multan included Motilal Nehru and Maulana Azad. Again in Nagpur, it was Azad who caused a compromise. In Bombay, Calcutta and elsewhere, he presided over meetings for peace and unity.

In 1927, following the appointment of the Simon Commission, a meeting was held in Calcutta under the chairmanship of Maulana Azad to consider the position. The meeting resolved to boycott the Simon Commission. In the beginning of 1928, Maulana Azad toured Lahore, Amritsar, Rawalpindi, Delhi and other places and advocated the boycott of the Simon Commission. In fact he played a leading role in making the boycott of the Simon Commission successful. Accompanied by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Azad visited C.R. Das, who was still in jail and together they decided that if the government released all political prisoners and a Round Table Conference could be held to make an honest effort at solving India's political problems the

boycott programme could be withdrawn. While Azad and C.R. Das were in favour of this move, Mahatma Gandhi did not agree. He urged that political prisoners must be released unconditionally. Thus the boycott continued unabated. In Uttar Pradesh, the police assaulted Jawaharlal Nehru with lathis, and Pandit Govind Vallabh Pant was hurt badly in trying to protect him. In Punjab, the police severely beat Lala Lajpat Rai. His speech on the event was prophetic. "Every blow that is rained on us today", he said, "is a nail in the coffin of the British Raj." These words have been inscribed under the statue of Lala Lajpat Rai in Simla. Lajpat Rai died of the wounds he sustained in this lathi charge and some young men avenged it on Lajpat Rai's next death anniversary by shooting down Sanders in Lahore. Bhagat Singh, Sukh Dev and Rajguru Govind were hanged for this killing. Towards the end of 1928, the annual session of the Congress was held in Calcutta under the presidentship of Motilal Nehru. It was decided that if the British Government did not concede Home Rule status to India, the Congress would set complete independence as its objective.

In addition to the Jamiat-ul-Ulema and the Khilafat Committee, a new Muslim organization called the Nationalist Muslim Party came into being. The first session of this party was held at Allahabad under the presidentship of Maulana Azad. Dr. M.A. Ansari and Tasudduq Ahmad Khan Sherwani were the moving spirit behind this party.

When the Congress, meeting under the presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru, declared on the midnight of December 31, 1929, its aim as complete independence, Maulana Azad and Dr. Ansari issued a joint statement on January 6, 1930 on behalf of the Nationalist Muslim Party in which they said:

"Now that the struggle for freedom has started, the demands of Muslims should be abandoned. It is meaningless to make demands, however justified they might be, when the war has started and it will prove detrimental to the real purpose of the struggle."

During March 1930, the Congress launched its campaign for full freedom and Mahatma Gandhi started his Dandi March. He was arrested on May 2, 1930 near the sea-shore for breaking the salt law. The whole country was galvanised into action. The number of those wanting to be arrested seemed endless. Maulana Azad urged the Muslims to join the satyagraha and at his call thousands of Muslims from Bengal, U.P., Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province courted arrest. The Congress instituted a system of Dictators for the movement. As soon as a Dictator was arrested he nominated another person as the Dictator. Maulana Azad succeeded Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel as the Dictator. Within 11 days he too was arrested and Dr. Ansari took over as Dictator. Azad was sentenced to six months' imprisonment for delivering an objectionable speech in Meerut. He was kept in the Meerut Jail and the country observed a hartal on his arrest.

After indulging in repression for some time, the British Government saw the futility of its action. At the end of the year, it started thinking in terms of releasing the prisoners and holding a Round Table Conference. The British Government had realized that the demand for freedom could not be scotched and hence it tried to outmanoeuvre the leaders through diplomatic skill.

In January 1931, Mahatma Gandhi and other members of the Congress Working Committee were released. There were talks between Mahatma Gandhi and Lord Irwin and civil disobedience was withdrawn unconditionally. At the Karachi session of the Congress, Mahatma Gandhi was nominated as the sole representative of the organization and he left for London during August 1931. The agents of the British Raj were shouting slogans of separate electorates at that time. But Maulana Azad got a resolution passed in favour of joint electorate at the meeting of the Muslim Nationalist Party held at Bombay.

At the Round Table Conference groups and interests dominated and people spoke with different voices. Inevitably it ended in failure. As the poet says:

'They came, they talked and they left.'

Gandhiji came back with empty hands, as expected. Maulana Azad inspired fellow countrymen in general and the Nationalist Muslims in particular to get ready for the decisive battle. In early 1932, a meeting of the Muslim leaders was held at Lucknow and it decided to boycott the Round Table Conference. On February 15, 1932 the acting Dictator Sardar Sardul Singh Cavesher was arrested and Maulana Azad succeeded him. The Government ordered him not to take part in the civil disobedience campaign. On Azad's refusal, he was interned in the Delhi jail and he remained there for about a year.

Lord Willingdon, who succeeded Lord Irwin as the Viceroy, was a harsh man by nature. He stepped up the repression. The Ali Brothers disassociated themselves from the movement at this time and said the Muslims would not longer participate in the satyagraha. But thousands of Muslims (including the Khudai Khidmatgars) led by Maulana Azad, Rafi Ahmad Kidwai and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan in the NWF Province courted arrest. The youth were getting out of hand. In Bengal and at other places, too, terrorism was raising its head and people began to admire the terrorists. The Congress, however, never supported the terrorists openly.

The British Parliament passed the Government of India Act in 1935 and preparations for the elections to the assemblies were started. Although Maulana Azad did not have much faith in legislative assemblies, he thought that this opportunity could be put to good use. If the Congress did not participate in the elections, undesirable persons would get into the Assemblies which would not only be unworthy but inimical to Congress and act as toadies to the British Government. However, there was difference of opinion in the Congress on this issue. The Congress made only one demand that the Governors would not

use their special powers. It fought the elections and won decisive majorities in five provinces and emerged as the largest single party in four other provinces. However, it was not successful in Sindh and the Punjab. The Congress did not form Ministries till the Viceroy made an explanatory statement on the special powers of the Governors.

It was a period of great enthusiasm. People saw for the first time how Congress had won actual political power. Maulana Azad's services were called for in different places for he could solve intricate problems. Although he was personally not in favour of joining the Legislature yet from the days of the Swaraj Party itself he had never identified himself with any group except, of course, that he did not support the leftist elements in the Congress and always supported Gandhiji.

After deciding to form Ministries, it was found necessary to constitute a Congress Parliamentary Board. Maulana Azad, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel were asked to serve on it. Maulana Azad was made in-charge of Parliamentary Affairs of Bengal, Bihar, U.P., Punjab, Sindh and NWFP. He performed his tasks with his usual sagacity and efficiency. In Assam, the Sa'adullah Ministry fell and was succeeded by a Congress-coalition Ministry. In North-West Frontier Province, a Congress Ministry was established. When the Chief Minister of Central Provinces, Dr. Khare, made certain changes in his cabinet without consulting the party, Maulana Azad was deputed to investigate the issue and on the basis of his investigations Dr. Khare was succeeded by Pandit Ravi Shanker Shukla as the leader of the party. Azad resolved the affairs of Sindh and Bihar in the same smooth manner.

Maulana Azad was able to solve problems because he was never swayed by subjective considerations. Being honest and forthright, he used to declare what he thought was right and correct and then nothing could make him change his stand. He differed in many matters from the decisions taken by the Congress. For instance, he thought that injustice had been done

to Mr. Nariman in Bombay and it was wrong not to make him the Chief Minister. He had also a great regard for C.R. Das whom he described as a practical statesman and a patriot who gave up his lucrative practice and life of ease for the love of his country. C.R. Das observed that while Muslims constituted more than 50 per cent of the population of Bengal, their number in government jobs came only to 30 per cent. He had the foresight to see the implications of this situation and he went about saying in Bengali that if the Congress came to power, it would reserve 60 per cent of government jobs for the Muslims till their percentage was proportionate to their population. Although many of his companions did not like it, Das realized that this was the right remedy. Azad considered it a tragedy that Das died so soon. Otherwise, if Das's policies had been accepted by the country, the Muslim League would have been rooted out. By founding the Swaraj Party, C.R. Das showed the path that the Congress adopted many years later by joining the legislatures. According to Azad, "one rarely comes across such a far-sighted and practical statesman as C.R. Das."

The Congress governments lasted for less than two years. During this period, Mr. Jinnah and his camp-followers raised a great hue and cry that the Muslims were being persecuted by the Congress governments. They even set up a committee which compiled a report full of rumours and half-truths. According to Maulana Azad not only he but even the Viceroy and the Governors were convinced that these allegations were absolutely baseless. On the other hand, the Congress Ministries had done an admirable job and the people were perfectly happy with them.

Maulana Azad had always remained above group politics in the Congress. When in 1923 he was President of the Congress session in Delhi, there was a tussle between the 'Changers' and 'No Changers'. Azad decreed that both—those who believed in constructive work among the masses and those who desired to enter the legislatures—were sincere in their desire to serve the country. Accordingly, both of these groups could go their own

ways and build up bridges of understanding. By 1935, the course of action showed by C.R. Das two years earlier was adopted by the Congress. During the interim period of 1933 to 1935, the Congress party was dormant and drifting aimlessly and only the Swaraj Party wing was showing some signs of life. As the Second World War approached, polarisation took place between the rightists and the leftists in the Congress and a tug of war started. At this critical moment, it was Maulana Azad who through his powers of sweet reasoning and persuasion kept the two groups within the party though he personally began to lean slightly towards the leftists as he was basically a reformer. Till 1939, Congress did not bother about elections in view of the troubled world situation.

Congress President

MAULANA AZAD WAS first elected Congress President in 1923 for the special session of the Congress held at Delhi. Here he ably brought about a satisfactory compromise between those who wanted to enter the legislatures and those who were opposed to it. Many eventful years followed after this. The Government of India Act 1935 gave provincial autonomy to India. Then Ramsay Macdonald hurled down the bolt of the Communal Award. This was the first gift received by India after the Round Table Conference. The Congress rejected this pernicious Award which envisaged even the separation of Harijans from Hindus and against which Mahatma Gandhi had to undertake a fast unto death. The fast was however terminated amicably through the Poona Pact between Dr. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi.

During 1936-37, elections were held for the provincial assemblies. The Congress scored such resounding victories in them that Jinnah came back post-haste from London to India. For two years these Ministries served with great success and Maulana Azad also acted with great distinction as a member of the Congress Parliamentary Board. Ultimately, the Congress was able to set up Ministries in eight provinces.

The Second World War started on September 3, 1939. The British Government made India a party in the war without consulting the people of India. The Congress Working Committee lodged a strong protest against this action but the Viceroy did

not give any satisfactory reply. Thereupon the Congress Working Committee declared:

“Under the condition it is not possible for the Congress Working Committee to accept the British imperialist policy. The Committee directs the Congress Ministries that as a first step towards the path that is now open to us, they should resign forthwith from the governments of their provinces.”

As a result, Congress Ministries resigned in all the eight provinces where they had formed the government. Jinnah and his camp-followers celebrated this as ‘Deliverance Day’ and compiled a baseless report accusing Congress governments of repressing the Muslims. This report, popularly known as the Pirpur Committee Report was supported, among others, even by the temperamental Bengali leader, Fazlul Haq. The British Government made full use of this report to drive a wedge between the Hindus and the Muslims.

It was at this juncture that Maulana Azad was elected President of the National Congress for the second time. In 1938, Subhas Chandra Bose had been elected the Congress President. Towards the end of that year, Maulana Azad was approached to accept the honour but Bose wanted to contest the election whereupon Maulana Azad withdrew his name. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel had already withdrawn in favour of Maulana Azad. This left only Pattabhi Sitaramayya in the field and he was defeated by Subhas Bose in the first Presidential election contested in the history of the Congress. But the party could not work smoothly. The open session adopted a resolution, moved by Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, that the Congress President should form his working committee in consultation with and approval of Mahatma Gandhi. This started a great controversy and after a prolonged correspondence between Subhas Bose and Mahatma Gandhi, Bose resigned and set up a separate party called the Forward Bloc. Then Dr. Rajendra Prasad was elected President for the remaining period. Next year Maulana Azad was again approached to

accept the honour and he agreed to do so. There was again a token contest, because M.N. Roy also contested but he had no support, and Maulana Azad was elected Congress President for the second time at the end of 1939.

It maybe mentioned here that Jawaharlal Nehru did not agree to serve on the Working Committee formed after Subhas Bose's resignation.

The Congress session was held at Ramgarh (Bihar) during March 1940. Maulana Azad's presidential address was a historic document. He exposed the machinations of the imperialist power and demanded complete independence and a Constituent Assembly for India. He analysed the problems of the Indian Muslims and their future at length and made fun of those who called a population of 90 millions a minority. He declared that whatever might be the shape of the future constitution of India, it must be an all India democratic federation in which the constituent units would be free in their internal affairs. About the Muslims he said:

“It is now nearly thirty years since I first attempted to examine this question as an Indian Musalman. The majority of the Muslims then were keeping completely apart from the political struggle and they were influenced by the same mentality of aloofness and antagonism, which prevailed amongst them previously in the year 1888. This depressing atmosphere did not prevent me from giving my anxious thought to this matter, and I reached quickly a final conclusion, which influenced my belief and action. I saw India with all her many burdens, marching ahead to her future destiny. We were fellow-passengers in this boat and we could not ignore its swift passage through the waters; and so it became necessary for us to come to a clear and final decision about our plan of action. How were we to do so? Not merely by skimming the surface of the problem but by going down to its roots, and then to consider our position. I did so and I realised that the solution of the whole problem depended on the answer to

one question: Do we, Indian Musalmans, view the free India of the future with suspicion and distrust or with courage and confidence? If we view it with fear and suspicion then undoubtedly we have to follow a different path. No present declaration, no promise for the future, no constitutional safeguards can be a remedy for our doubts and fears. We are then forced to tolerate the existence of a third power. This third power is already entrenched here and has no intention of withdrawing, and if we follow this path of fear, we must need look forward to its continuance. But if we are convinced that for us fear and doubt have no place, and that we must view the future with courage and confidence in ourselves, then our course of action becomes absolutely clear. We find ourselves in a new world, which is free from the dark shadows of doubt, vacillation, inaction and apathy, and where the light of faith and determination, action and enthusiasm never fails. The confusions of times, the ups and downs that come our way, the difficulties that beset our thorny path, cannot change the direction of our steps. It becomes our bounden duty then to march with assured steps to India's national goal."

As Congress President, Maulana Azad retained the following ten members of the previous Working Committee;

- 1.Smt. Sarojini Naidu
- 2.Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel
- 3.Shri Jamnalal Bajaj
- 4.Acharya J.B. Kripalani
- 5.Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan
- 6.Shri Bhulabhai Desai
- 7.Shri Shankar Rao Deo
- 8.Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh
- 9.Dr. Rajendra Prasad

Jawaharlal Nehru who had not joined the previous Working Committee was persuaded by Maulana Azad to join

the new one. In addition, the three other new members were: C. Rajagopalachari, Dr. Syed Mahmud and Asaf Ali.

The Resolution on the War situation passed by the Ramgarh Session of the Congress was as follows:

“The Congress having considered the grave and critical situation resulting from the War in Europe and British policy in regard to it, approves of and endorses the resolutions passed and the action taken on the war situation by the AICC and the Working Committee.

“... The Congress considers the declaration, by the British Government of India as a belligerent country, without any reference to the people of India, and the exploitation of India's resources in this war as an affront to them, which no self-respecting and freedom-loving people can accept or tolerate. The recent pronouncements made by the British Government in regard to India demonstrate that Great Britain is carrying on the war fundamentally for imperialist ends and for the preservation and strengthening of the Empire, which is based on the exploitation of the people of India as well as of other Asiatic and African countries. Under the circumstances, it is clear that the Congress cannot in any way, directly or indirectly, be party to the War, which means continuance and perpetuation of this exploitation. The Congress therefore sharply disapproves of Indian troops being made to fight for Great Britain and the drain from India of men and material for the purpose of the War...

“The people of India alone can properly shape their own constitution and determine their relations with the other countries of the world through a constituent assembly elected on the basis of adult suffrage. The Congress is further of opinion that while it will always be ready as it ever has been to make every effort to secure communal harmony, no permanent solution is possible except through a constituent assembly where the rights of all recognized minorities will be fully

protected by agreement, as far as possible, between the elected representatives of various majority or minority groups, or by arbitration if agreement not reached on any point."

The resolution broadly reflects the same ideas which Maulana Azad expounded in his Presidential Address.

The All India Congress Committee met at Poona and passed two important resolutions. The first resolution reiterated that non-violence was the only correct policy for the Congress. The second resolution declared that India would undoubtedly support the democratic forces in their war with the Nazis but she would not be prepared or able to do so till she herself attained freedom. In other words, it was an offer to the British Government that if they freed India, the people of India would support them. Mahatma Gandhi was against this resolution, for he believed that to give any sort of help or support in the war was a violation of the principles of non-violence. Respecting Mahatma Gandhi's sentiments, the majority of the members of the Working Committee submitted their resignations from the Working Committee. Maulana Azad dealt with the situation in his usual smooth manner. He assured the members that there was no earthly chance of the British Government agreeing to give India anything. Thus the question of support would never arise. He declared that as he too was in full sympathy with the feeling of the majority of the members there was no need for them to resign. Thus the crisis was resolved.

Meanwhile, Mahatma Gandhi advised the British Government to face Hitler with non-violence. This naturally was not taken seriously though Mahatma Gandhi even called on the Viceroy to explain his view point. Lord Linlithgow was so taken aback that he did not see Mahatma Gandhi up to his car. Mentioning this to Maulana Azad, Mahatma Gandhi remarked that Lord Linlithgow seemed to have forgotten even ordinary courtesies. Maulana Azad retorted that the proposal was so astounding that ordinary

mortals would naturally be quite dumbfounded. At this Mahatma Gandhi burst out laughing.

The British Government paid no heed to India's demands. Individual satyagraha was started and Mahatma Gandhi conferred on Vinoba Bhave the distinction of being the first satyagrahi. He was followed by Jawaharlal and others. Being preoccupied with party matters and a tour of Punjab, Maulana Azad had not yet offered satyagraha when he was arrested at the Allahabad railway station while drinking his evening tea in the railway restaurant. He was sentenced to two years imprisonment and lodged in the Naini Central Jail where he was soon joined by Dr. K.N. Katju.

Maulana Azad became the President of the Indian National Congress at a most critical period in the history of India. A chain of circumstances compelled him to retain this charge from 1940 to 1946. Because of this responsibility, even though Azad had some free time in Jail, he could not devote it to writing. "It is said", remarked Azad, "that so and so was sentenced to solitary confinement. As if solitude could ever be a punishment!"

Meanwhile, there were some quick developments on the war front. In June 1941 Germany invaded Russia thus flouting the no-war pact between the two countries signed by Molotov and Ribbentrop. Six months later, Japan also joined the Axis and destroyed the American Naval Base at Pearl Harbour in the Pacific. Thereafter, Japanese forces annexed Malaya, Singapore and Burma and her fleet began to penetrate into the Bay of Bengal and even occupied the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Meanwhile, Subhas Chandra Bose who had escaped from his internment, reached Germany, met Hitler and returned to the East to raise an army called the Indian National Army from among the Indian prisoners of war held by the Japanese. The Indian National Army was able to reach the Indian borders.

America was keenly aware of the Indian problem. President Roosevelt of the USA pressed the British Government to negotiate

with the Indian leaders and arrive at an understanding with them. When Japan entered into the war and struck the first blow at the USA, Roosevelt increased the pressure on the British Government and they came out with the Cripps Proposals. Prior to this, General and Mrs. Chiang Kai-Shek visited India and met Azad, Nehru and Gandhi. The object of their visit was to evolve an honourable and acceptable settlement. Azad and Nehru could meet them because they had been released by October 1941, before the expiry of their sentence.

Chiang Kai-Shek knew no language other than Chinese. He could talk to Azad only through an interpreter. Later on, he was joined by Madam Chiang Kai-Shek who was fluent in English and as such conversation became easier. Chiang Kai-Shek urged the Congress to accept Dominion Status if it was granted forthwith, because there was not really much difference between Dominion Status and Independence. Azad said that it would depend upon the details of the agreement but he insisted on a firm commitment by the British Government that complete independence would be given top priority at the cessation of war. The discussions were quite detailed and time consuming and Azad's logic was irrefutable. At the end of the conversation, while serving tea, Madam Chiang Kai-Shek enquired if the details of the conversation could be conveyed to the British Government? Azad had no objection.

Chiang Kai-Shek next met Mahatma Gandhi in Calcutta. Mahatma Gandhi reiterated his principle of non-violence which the Chinese leader could not fully comprehend. Mahatma Gandhi thereupon told him about his experiences in South Africa. Jawaharlal Nehru differed from Mahatma Gandhi's views in this respect and he was not very happy with this meeting.

Maulana Azad had called a meeting of the Working Committee immediately after his release. This meeting, held at Bardoli at the instance of Mahatma Gandhi, continued for two

days but no positive decision could be taken. Gandhiji was adamant. He could not even think of helping or participating in the war as he was not willing to sacrifice *Ahimsa* and his principles at any cost. It was a matter of faith with him and not a policy that could be changed. Maulana Azad's stand was that the primary objective was to attain freedom and *Ahimsa* was only a method of achieving it. One should continue to use *Ahimsa* but it should not be elevated to the position of a doctrine or faith. Azad felt that if freedom could be attained by cooperating or giving some help in the war, it should be done. Although as long as Indians were slaves and in fetters it would be incorrect and even foolhardy to extend help to, or cooperate, with the Government. Maulana Azad wrote that General Chiang Kai-Shek, before his departure from India, appealed to the British Government that the right of India to freedom should be acknowledged forthwith and she should be given Dominion Status immediately, and complete Independence as soon as the war was over. The Viceroy and the British Government remained unmoved by this appeal.

The most critical period of Maulana Azad's life had arrived. The pressure exerted by President Roosevelt on the British Government began to show some effect. At the beginning of the war, Sir Stafford Cripps had come to India and had held lengthy discussions with Maulana Azad. He even went to the Congress Working Committee meeting at Wardha. Cripps said that Mahatma Gandhi's views regarding *Ahimsa* were known all over the world and it was not possible to evolve any compromise with him. He asked Maulana Azad whether the Maulana could persuade the Congress to cooperate in the war in case the British Government gave an assurance of Independence. Azad was outspoken; his reasoning was very sharp and he never evaded a decision. He said that while the Congress leaders acknowledged Mahatma Gandhi as their supreme leader and were devoted to him, he was sure that if a declaration of the grant of Independence was made, the Congress and the public both would accept this

proposal. However, all this remained a verbal exercise though Cripps prepared a memorandum proposing that the Viceroy's Executive Council should be reconstituted and its members should be equated with a Minister. He also stipulated that the Viceroy would only be a constitutional head and would not interfere in the work of the Council though, during the period of the war, the government would be in the hands of the Indians only temporarily but it would be transferred to them permanently only after the war. After this, Cripps was sent to Moscow as British Ambassador to the Soviet Union. When Germany invaded Russia, Cripps gained more prominence and his diplomacy was hailed far and wide. After successfully completing the mission in Moscow, Cripps was sent again to India. Probably he had already shown his memorandum regarding talks with Maulana Azad to Churchill and he felt that by renewing his efforts in India, success would not elude him this time.

It was suddenly announced by the BBC on March 11, 1942 that the British Government was sending Sir Stafford Cripps to India with a very important message which he would announce after obtaining the consent of the Indian leaders. Maulana Azad, who was at Wardha, was telegraphically requested by the Viceroy to reach Delhi at the earliest so as to take part in some talks. His presence at these talks was essential as he was the Congress President. When the press correspondents asked for Maulana's reaction on the news, he as usual declined to make any statement.

Before his arrival in India, Cripps had written to the Viceroy that he wanted to meet Indian leaders of divergent views. Accordingly, the Viceroy had invited not only the Congress leaders but also those of the Muslim League, the Princely States, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Nationalist Muslim leader, Khan Bahadur Allah Bux of Sindh. In his book *India Wins Freedom*, Maulana Azad has specially mentioned Khan Bahadur Allah Bux who was the Chief Minister of Sindh and who had recently presided over an All India Convention of Nationalist Muslims

in Delhi. This Convention was attended by about 1400 Muslim delegates from all over India and the English and Anglo-Indian press had given prominence to its proceedings.

The first meeting between Azad and Cripps took place on March 29, 1942. Cripps handed over to Azad a statement which contained some new proposals, and said that these could be elucidated. The main proposal was that the members of the Viceroy's Executive Council would resign and they would be replaced by Indian members. When Maulana Azad asked for clarification it was said that the Viceroy would be just a constitutional head, like the British king, and that he would not interfere in the decisions taken by the Council.

The Congress Working Committee met on March 29, 1942, and it continued to meet till April 11, 1942. During this period many talks were held and many letters were exchanged.

Cripps met Gandhiji on March 27, 1942. After seeing the proposals, Mahatma Gandhi told Cripps that he had taken unnecessary trouble in coming all the way from England with such proposals and that he might as well go back and not waste his time. While Gandhiji was basically opposed to cooperating in the war efforts, he had also discerned a note of duplicity in these proposals. He thought they could have the following undesirable results:

1. India would be divided into three parts;
2. Indian Ministers would have no control over defence under this scheme;
3. It promised only Dominion Status and not freedom;
4. The minorities were being given the right of veto.

Jawaharlal was concerned at the way things were shaping in the war. Other leaders could not arrive at any decision and most of them waited for Mahatma Gandhi to give a lead. The difficulty was that Cripps did not explain fully the status of the Commander-in-Chief and he went on changing his stand on this issue. At first he said that the Commander-in-Chief would also act as Defence Minister and no one else would interfere in defence

matters. When Maulana Azad and the Working Committee took exception to this, Cripps stated that an Indian would be made the Defence Minister and he would look after some Agricultural Department as well. The Congress rejected this also. Discussions continued and Cripps went on shifting his position skillfully. Now he was even resiling from one or two basic points of the original memorandum he had prepared at the beginning of the war. He also started saying that other parties, particularly the Muslims, must agree to any settlement evolved. It is interesting to note that Cripps had of his own accord invited Khan Bahadur Allah Bux of Sindh to attend the talks but he was avoiding a meeting with him. Perhaps the Muslim League was insisting that a nationalist Muslim should not be considered the representative of Muslims. Ultimately, when Allah Bux said he would wait no longer, Maulana Azad insisted and Cripps agreed to meet him.

In the new proposals there was no mention of Independence and this was pointed out by Maulana Azad orally as well as in writing.

Meanwhile, Jawaharlal Nehru made a visit to China and on his return he stated that China would need India's help to fight the Japanese. Therefore, while the Cripps proposals were much below expectations, they should be accepted. Azad could not bear this change of heart in Nehru. He was so agitated that he kept awake till two o'clock in the night. He met Jawaharlal in the morning at Rameshwari Nehru's house where Jawaharlal was staying. There was prolonged discussion between the two leaders and Azad explained to Nehru that upon him (Nehru) devolved the responsibility of shaping the future of the whole country. Hence Nehru must make up his mind only after due deliberation.

Ultimately, on April 11, 1942 the Working Committee rejected the proposals put forward by the Cripps Mission. Cripps returned home and Jawaharlal left for Allahabad. Azad was about to leave for Calcutta when somebody informed him that Jawaharlal was either going to issue a statement or broadcast over the AIR, expressing his difference of opinion

with the Working Committee decision. On way to Calcutta Maulana Azad halted at Allahabad and met Jawaharlal who promised not to take any step which might be against the interest of the country. On the other hand, Rajagopalachari had a resolution passed by the Madras Legislative Party that the Cripps proposals should have been accepted. This was an open defiance of the Working Committee and Azad promptly asked him to explain how he could do so while being a member of the Working Committee. Rajaji apologized and resigned from the Working Committee.

Throughout these talks, Maulana Azad had instructed the members of the Working Committee not to meet him in private. He had also instructed them not to meet Cripps without his permission. This illustrates how strict he was in matters of party discipline.

Before his departure, Cripps wrote a letter to Jawaharlal in which he expressed his admiration for him and appealed to him not to let this opportunity slip through his fingers. Cripps urged that the decision was in the hands of Jawaharlal. It was a moment to display courage and patience. Jawaharlal was a great leader and he should exercise his influence and power of action. Jawaharlal eluded this trap and wrote back that a socialist like Cripps should realize that there was a limit to which Congress could be pressurized and a limit to which the Congress could carry the masses with it. Jawaharlal also expressed surprise at the fact that Cripps had complicated the issue by raising the question of minorities at this juncture. The Congress had realized that the talks had been made to fail right in the middle by the tactics adopted by Lord Linlithgow and his Government, because they did not want a decision which would have redounded to the credit of the Congress.

The Muslim League had always put obstacles in the way of India's march towards freedom. It was created in 1906 when it held its first session at Dacca during Christmas. It was due to Nawab Mushtaq Hussain's efforts that the Muslim League session

was held immediately after that of the Muslim Education Conference which was attended, among others, by Maulana Azad. The League was founded on two principles: that the Muslims should continue to be loyal to the British Indian Government and that the Muslim rights should be safeguarded by opposing the Hindus. The League was totally opposed to the demand for freedom made by the Congress, for it feared that should it make a common cause with the Congress, the British Government would not bother about the Muslims' demands and they would be denied their share. Indeed the League considered the Congress a rebel organisation and it did not even trust moderates like Gokhale and Sir Feroz Shah Mehta. The British Government kept on using the Muslim League to counter the Congress demands.

After this, when the Government agreed to carry out some reforms, the League at first kept aloof from politics, but later on it began to make demands on behalf of the Muslims. This attitude was most welcome to the British Government which wanted to perpetuate Hindu-Muslim differences and its own sovereignty. At every state, the Muslim League obeyed the dictates of the government and raised a hue and cry that Muslim rights were being trampled upon. This assumed great importance during the Second World War. Mohammad Ali Jinnah was a Congress member, to begin with. He left the organisation in 1920, when it passed the Non-cooperation Resolution at its special session in Calcutta. Gradually, he became a Muslim leader. When the talks between the Congress and the government broke down, Jinnah kept quiet or at most said that it was not necessary for the Muslim League to make any statement as no decision had been taken. But it is reasonable to suppose that in his heart he was mortified with the Congress and most annoyed with Maulana Azad. On August 8, 1940 when the Viceroy offered to expand his Executive Council and invited the Indian leaders to join it, Maulana Azad, as the Congress President, wrote to Jinnah asking him to endorse the conditions the

Congress had conveyed to the Viceroy. Jinnah gave a most impertinent reply:

“I have received your telegram. I cannot reciprocate confidence. I refuse to discuss with you by correspondence or otherwise as you have completely forfeited the confidence of Muslim India. Can you not realize you are made a Muslim showboy Congress President to give it colour that it is national and deceive foreign countries. You represent neither Muslims nor Hindus. The Congress is a Hindu body. If you have self-respect resign at once. You have done your worst against the League so far. You know you have hopelessly failed. Give it up.”

This may be called the height of vindictiveness for one who was, even otherwise, a cold-blooded person. As for Azad who had never acknowledged Jinnah's stature and who himself was quite distinguished in Islamic world, Jinnah bore the greatest enmity. The above telegram is a standing testimony of the lack of decorum on the part of the Muslim League leader.

Cripps Mission afforded a ray of hope for India as well as for the British Government. But the Mission having failed, the government began to consider the course of action it should adopt in case the Japanese attacked and invaded Bengal. There was a general atmosphere of fear and gloom. Maulana Azad was busy with his own schemes. He had divided Calcutta into a number of wards, set up committees in the city and elsewhere and decided that if the Japanese invaded Calcutta and tried to install a government there, these committees would anticipate the Japanese action and set up an Indian government over some parts of India. Mahatma Gandhi did not agree with Maulana Azad. He thought that the Japanese were the enemies of the British Government, not of India. Gandhiji wanted to launch a mass movement. The month of May and June passed by in this controversy. When the Congress Working Committee met in Wardha on July 5, 1942 Mahatma Gandhi spoke for the first time to Maulana Azad about the Quit India Movement. He thought that if the movement succeeded, India would be able to say to the

Japanese that there was no need for them to come as their enemies were no longer there. Mahatma Gandhi's way of thinking was quite unique. Azad was highly concerned at this situation and began to worry about the future. He apprehended that the Congress leaders would be arrested and during their absence the movement would turn violent. This would hurt the Congress reputation because violence in any form was against the Congress creed, and it was also unthinkable under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The Maulana was, however, willing to sacrifice this principle in case freedom was granted immediately. But there seemed to be no prospect of that, too.

In its meeting on July 5, 1942, the Congress Working Committee considered Gandhiji's proposal and endorsed it. Thousands of foreign pressmen had flocked at Wardha to find out what miracle the Mahatma could achieve. The decision however remained confidential. The people knew though that some new revolutionary movement would be launched. Even so the Congress took no hurried action. Miss Slade (Mira Behan) was sent to the Viceroy as the messenger of the Congress. The Private Secretary of the Viceroy said that as Mahatma Gandhi was talking of sedition, there would be no point in a meeting.

The All India Congress Committee met in Bombay on August 7, 1942. Meanwhile the Congress President, Maulana Azad, had been meeting the provincial leaders and issuing instructions that in the event of all the leaders being arrested during the course of the movement, every individual would act as his own leader. They should, however, make every effort to follow Mahatma Gandhi's instructions. Azad left Calcutta for Bombay on August 3. On August 5, the Working Committee drafted a resolution for the approval of the AICC. By refusing to meet Miss Slade, the Viceroy had already shut the door on negotiations and it was obvious that he was ready for a confrontation in every manner. When the resolution was adopted after two days of discussion, it was already being remoured that the leaders would be arrested the next morning.

Maulana Azad was staying with Bhulabhai Desai. He returned there late at night. He too had been informed of his impending arrest by a young police officer who was his admirer. Azad hurriedly took his dinner and tried to catch up with some sleep. He had hardly slept for 15 minutes when the Deputy Commissioner of Police arrived with the warrant. It was about five in the morning when Maulana Azad moved out with the police party. They went to the Victoria Terminus where a special train was waiting for them. Within a few minutes, Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. Syed Mahmud, Asaf Ali and others also arrived and were put in the same compartment with Maulana Azad. Mahatma Gandhi was kept in another bogie. Gandhiji and Sarojini Naidu were kept in the Aga Khan's Palace at Poona while Azad and others were interned at the Ahmednagar Fort. It was originally proposed to remove all of them to South Africa but for some reason this was not acted upon.

The objective of the Quit India Movement was to make the British Government relinquish power in India as they had done in Burma, Malaya and Singapore and not that every Englishman should physically leave India. The movement spread like wild fire. Thousands of Indians were arrested. There were violent incidents too, for there was no one to stop them. Everybody was moved at the leaders' imprisonment except for Jinnah who actually welcomed it. It was an irony of fate that the real leader of the Muslims, Maulana Azad, who had started the struggle for freedom and raised the slogan for Hindu-Muslim unity at the early age of 18, was inside the prison while the so-called Muslim leader, Jinnah, who had no inkling of the true spirit of Islam, was being favoured by the government because he persisted in opposing the Congress and misleading the Muslims at the instance of the British overlords. It was only self-interest that made the British Government give so much importance to Jinnah otherwise there was no dearth of Muslim parties in India like the Khudai Khidmatgars, the Jamiatul-Ulema, the Majlis-e-Ahrar, the Momin Conference, the Muslim Nationalist Party

and the All-India Shia Conference. The leaders of these parties – notable among them being Hakim Ajmal Khan, Dr. M.A. Ansari, Asaf Ali, Dr. Syed Mahmud, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Nawab Khizr Hayat Khan, Khan Bahadur Allah Bux—equaled Jinnah in stature and political sagacity. All of them were men of great personal eminence and considerable following. We need not mention Maulana Azad in this list as he was in a class by himself.

The Quit India Movement of August 9, 1942 had revolutionized the thinking of Indians. All fears and apprehensions had been driven out from their minds and they had begun to breathe and air of hope and self-confidence. The Indian National Army trials and the mutiny in the Indian Navy boldly highlighted the fact that the country had become freedom-conscious. When the INA trial was held in the Red Fort, Jawaharlal Nehru himself appeared as the Chief Defence Counsel.

While detained in the Ahmadnagar Fort, Nehru had started writing *The Discovery of India*. Actually, whenever the Indian leaders went to jail, they relished the enforced leisure as it gave them an opportunity to give free play to their creative faculties. Nehru thanked his companions in jail for the assistance they rendered in writing this book. Azad too wrote his classic letters to a friend, while in Ahmadnagar Fort, which were later published under the title *Ghubar-e-Khatir* (Dust on the Heart). He began this book by quoting a verse by a Persian poet, Bekhabar Bilgrami:

*Ask me not what my halting pen writes,
These beautiful calligraphed lines
Express the feelings of my dusty heart,
And reveal that my whole life
Has been reduced to dust.*

Azad writes that Ahmadnagar Fort had many long military barracks where the prisoners were lodged. When Azad went there, he had a small radio set which was promptly taken away by the jail authorities and returned to him only after his release. Dinner

was served in iron plates. When it was brought to the notice of the jailor, he apologized and promised to arrange for a dinning set the next day. A prisoner was brought over from Poona to serve as Maulana Azad's cook. Neither he, nor the other prisoner who replaced him, could cook the type of food Azad was used to. A few days later the Inspector General of Prisons, Bombay, came and he told the prisoners that they could neither write letters nor get newspapers. It was obvious they were to be kept isolated from the rest of the world. The Inspector General of Prisons spoke courteously and regretted his inability to do anything as the orders were most strict. He however promised to satisfy all their needs provided any of them were not specifically forbidden.

Maulana Azad developed influenza in those days. The Inspector General of Prisons, who was himself a physician, offered to examine him. But Azad declined the offer as he did not want to enjoy any special privileges.

The detenues had organized their time-table in such a manner that they were always busy and thus pass their time gainfully. They used to get together at breakfast, lunch, tea and dinner time and converse with each other. At the suggestion of Jawaharlal, they took to gardening. Gradually the flowers began to bloom. From the sprouting of the plants to the opening of the buds, they watched these operations with the same fascination and interest as they had watched their own lives unfold in the struggle of independence. Then they had a new jailor who lived in the city and was in the Fort only from 10.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. Nobody knew the name of this commuter. Maulana Azad remembered that when Chand Bibi was imprisoned in the Ahmednagar Fort, her jailor's name was Cheeta Khan and he proposed to call the present incumbent by the same name. The move was adopted by acclamation and as long as they stayed there, the poor jailor was called by no other name.

On August 25, 1942, Maulana Azad wrote to the Viceroy that when ordinary criminals in jail were allowed to write to their families, it was beyond comprehension why he and his co-

prisoners were deprived of that right. He also wrote that if no satisfactory reply was received within two weeks, he and his companions would feel free to adopt other measures. Consequently, on September 19, Cheeta Khan, the jailor, announced that they could write to their families once a week. At the same time he started supplying newspapers to the prisoners. After a long time, Azad learnt of the happenings in the country after the leaders' arrest. The next day, he told Cheeta Khan that since there was no restriction on receiving newspapers, he should be given all the newspapers since his arrest. The jailor agreed to do so, and gave him the file of old papers. When Azad went through the papers, he found that his predictions had been confirmed. In Bengal, Bihar, U.P. and Bombay the movement was continuing vigorously but, as he had apprehended, violence had entered into it. The means of communication had been paralysed. Factories had been closed. Government office and military trucks were being attacked, police posts were being burnt, in short, there was complete anarchy.

Due to this violence, Mahatma Gandhi went on a 21-day self-purificatory fast in 1943. Dr. B.C. Roy was allowed to look after him as his personal physician. There was little hope of his survival, but he did and then he was released due to ill health.

Mahatma Gandhi's fast did create a tension among the detenues of the Ahmadnagar Fort. After his release, life in the Fort returned to normal pattern. They looked after their flowers, wrote and studied, exchanged pleasantries with each other, enjoyed Maulana Azad's witty sallies, and amused themselves at the expense of Cheeta Khan, who has been immortalized in Maulana Azad's *India Wins Freedom*.

While he was in Ahmadnagar Fort, Maulana Azad heard the news of his wife's critical illness and he bore it with exemplary fortitude. This was followed by the news of her death. A man of flesh and blood, Azad was shocked to the core, by this tragedy, yet he again bore it manfully. However, to relieve his feeling he wrote a poignant letter at her death which was included in

Ghubar-e-Khatir (for a translation please see appendix 5). Azad's sister also died during this period.

The detainees began to sense that their release was being contemplated. Maulana Azad thought it most regrettable that Mahatma Gandhi as appeasing Jinnah and giving him undue importance. In a way it was Mahatma Gandhi who conferred the title of *Qaid-e-Azam* upon Jinnah. Being a large-hearted person, Gandhiji was ever willing to give respect to his adversaries howsoever uncalled for it might be. Actually, Mahatma Gandhi had consulted one of the inmates of his Ashram, a Muslim lady, as to how Jinnah should be addressed. That lady had seen Jinnah addressed as *Qaid-e-Azam* in Urdu papers and in innocence, she mentioned the title to Gandhiji without releasing its implications. Thereafter Gandhiji wrote a letter to Jinnah expressing his desire to meet him and addressed him as *Qaid-e-Azam*. This was sufficient to make the title of *Qaid-e-Azam* stick to Jinnah.

Maulana Azad was in jail when he read of this correspondence and he told his companions that Gandhiji was committing a blunder. Jinnah made the fullest use of this.

In *India Wins Freedom* Maulana Azad has described the relationship between the political leaders in the Fort. When Azad suggested that if the British Government were willing to grant freedom India should support the war effort, Mahatma Gandhi opposed this concept because of his belief in non-violence. On that occasion, the close followers of Mahatma Gandhi like Sardar Patel, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Acharya J.B. Kripalani and Dr. Profulla Chandra Ghosh were willing to resign from Maulana Azad's Working Committee, rather than oppose Mahatma Gandhi. But Azad points out, after India became independent, none of these staunch believers in non-violence proposed that the Indian army should be disbanded. On the other hand when it was proposed by the then Commander-in-Chief that for the first three years India and Pakistan should have a Joint Command, they were the first to insist that the Indian army must be forthwith placed under the command of Indian Generals.

Ultimately, Maulana Azad and his companions were separated and sent to different jails to await their release. Maulana Azad was sent to the Bankura Jail in Bengal. In May 1945, the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, went to England and on his return he announced that the British Government was now willing to transfer power to Indians and a conference would be held in Simla to consider the details. He also announced that the members of the Congress Working Committee would be released immediately.

Maulana Azad's release was enthusiastically welcomed in Calcutta and throughout the country. Presumably, when the Cripps Mission proposals were rejected by the Congress and the Congress leaders were arrested it created an adverse effect in the USA and China who had expected that the British Government would not let the issues to come to such a pass. President Roosevelt had announced that at the end of the war every country would have the right of self-determination. The need for India's assistance was being felt sorely in view of the Japanese victories which were troubling the USA. On June 14, 1945, Amerey, Secretary of State for India, announced in the House of Commons that he was asking the Congress and the Muslim League to form a government and to decide about the war as they liked. The Congress could nominate anybody, Jawaharlal or Maulana Azad.

The day after his release, Maulana Azad received the Viceroy's invitation to attend the proposed Round Table Conference at Simla. Azad's health had deteriorated. He had lost 40 pounds in the jail and he could hardly eat. Some persons advised him that in view of the delicate state of his health he should suggest to the Viceroy that the Conference be postponed. But Azad had great power of endurance and he refused to do so. After taking full powers from the Working Committee to negotiate on behalf of the Congress, he left for Simla. Considering his health, Lord Wavell asked him to stay at a house in the Vice-regal Estate and sent his personal servants to take care of him. This made things slightly easier for him.

When Azad met Wavell, both of them impressed each other favourably. The Viceroy said that the Executive Council would be wholly Indian and the Viceroy would not interfere but Azad felt that this offer did not differ materially from the Cripps proposal except that the British intentions seemed to be more sincere and reliable as they had already won the war on one front. A meeting of the Working Committee was held in Simla at the place where Gandhiji was staying in which Azad gave details of his talks with Wavell. The Working Committee sought clarifications on the following points:

1. The mutual relationship between the Viceroy and the Executive Council.
2. The army should be under an Indian.
3. The British Government had pushed India into war without ascertaining her will. Now if Indian representatives form a government, it would be for their Constituent Assembly to decide whether India should declare war against Japan.

Gandhiji was present in this meeting and he protested against participation in war.

Jinnah, however, put a spoke in the wheel by remaining adamant on his stand that the Congress should have no right to nominate any Muslim. He wanted to drag the Congress down to his own level. It was ironic that the Congress which fought the battle for freedom, which treated the people of every race and creed alike, the party which was popular among all, was being denied the right to nominate a Muslim on the Viceroy's Executive Council. Thus the Simla Conference also met the same fate as the Cripps Mission for the League could sense that if it remained adamant, its dream of 1940, that the country be divided, had a good chance of being realized. On the one hand the British were not quite keen to transfer powers, and, on the other hand, the Congress could feel that its demand for freedom would probably be conceded and was, accordingly, impatient to throw off the yoke of slavery. The League led by Jinnah was playing the opportunist

and indulging in a selfish game, which was to benefit none except a handful of persons. The later events confirmed how partition was like a cancer that poisoned the whole sub-continent.

At the end of the Simla Conference, Maulana Azad wrote to Lord Wavell that all political prisoners should be freed. As a result most of them, excepting those who were suspected of violent activities during the Quit India Movement, were released.

After the failure of the Simla Conference, the Viceroy announced that General Elections would be held. In England, the Labour Party came into power and events began to develop quickly. In the election the Congress gained a majority in all the provinces except Bengal, Sindh and Punjab. Even in Punjab a Unionist Ministry was set up under Khizr Hayat Khan Tiwana with the support of the Congress Party and despite opposition from the Muslim League.

In the beginning of 1946, a parliamentary delegation was sent to India by the Labour Government. It consisted of Lord Pethwic Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps and Alexander. Attlee, in a historic speech in Parliament, stated that the previous mistakes committed by both sides should be forgiven and forgotten. It was no longer 1930 or 1940 and, despite differences among themselves, Indians were now at a stage where they should start governing themselves.

Maulana Azad proposed a solution of the communal problem to the Working Committee. Though drawing a line at the division of the country, it contained quite a generous offer to the League and other minorities. Gandhiji expressed his admiration for it, but the League which in its 1940 resolution had asked only for maximum powers to the Muslim majority provinces, now demanded nothing less than the partition of the country.

Maulana Azad had proposed that the country should be divided into three zones, called A, B and C. Zone B was to comprise Gujarat, Sindh, North West Frontier Province and the British Baluchistan while Zone C was to contain Assam and Bengal. The rest of country was to form Zone A. Although the

Congress did not like this division it agreed to this formula for the three Zones were to form a confederation which would have retained the unity of the country. Jinnah realised that this was the best bargain he could get and the League accepted it after some hesitation.

On June 8, 1946, the Congress Working Committee accepted the Cabinet Mission proposals, although the Interim Government envisaged under it was not acceptable to the Congress. These proposals also suggested Zonal divisions and a Constituent Assembly. On July 7, the proposals were also approved by the All India Congress, and Jawaharlal Nehru was elected Congress President in place of Maulana Azad.

Maulana Azad remained Congress President for seven years which encompassed the most crucial period not only for the Congress but also for the country. He had to work hard and he was fully conscious of his great responsibilities. He never tried to force his opinion upon others. At the same time, he never accepted others' views if they did not seem rational to him. His outspokenness, insight into affairs, sense of dignity and duty and tolerance proved to be great assets for Congress and the country. He tried his best to be fair and just to everybody. He held forth the banner of justice because he wanted justice for India.

On assuming the office of the Congress President, Jawaharlal Nehru gave a statement to the press in which he said that though the Congress had accepted the Cabinet Mission proposals, they would not be binding on the Constituent Assembly. Jinnah immediately blew it up out of all proportions. He asked Liaquat Ali Khan to call a session of the Muslim League.

As mentioned earlier, the Muslim League had only one policy since its inception—to oppose the Congress. Accordingly, on July 27, 1946, it rejected the Cabinet Mission proposals and decided to observe a Direct Action Day on August 16, 1946. The League was out to convince the British Government even if it involved Hindu-Muslim riots and bloodshed and killing of

innocent persons that Hindus and Muslims could never live amicably. The Direct Action was launched in Calcutta under the auspices of the Chief Minister, Suhrawardy. He chose the role of the passive spectator. The army and the police were ordered to remain alert but not to interfere. The carnage that took place in Calcutta, under Suhrawardy's regime and Jinnah's overall leadership, is a shameful story that can never be forgotten.

Jinnah was under the delusion that the government could not do without bowing to his demands. But the Cabinet Mission was determined to do something. Churchill on whose patronage Jinnah relied was no longer in power. The Direct Action in Calcutta was followed by riots in Noakhali and Bihar, but even so the Viceroy invited Jawaharlal Nehru to form an Interim Government. At first the League did not join the Ministry but it soon began to regret this and, in a meeting with the Viceroy, Jinnah allowed himself to be won over. The League joined the Ministry in October, 1946.

To give itself a national status, the League included one Jogendranath Mandal among its nominees for ministership. Interestingly a little after the formation of Pakistan, Mandal migrated and settled down in Calcutta.

It was the endeavour of Maulana Azad and his colleagues, and Lord Wavell's desire too, that the unity of India should be preserved under the Cabinet Plan. They made a sincere effort to minimise the differences between the Muslim League and the Congress. Moreover the Labour Party in England was also keen to resolve the problem and the Prime Minister, Attlee, was taking a personal interest in it. In November, 1946 he called a Conference of the Congress and the Muslim League leaders in London and Lord Wavell was also asked to attend. Lord Wavell requested Maulana Azad to persuade Jawaharlal Nehru to represent the Congress. Accordingly, Lord Wavell, Jawaharlal and Jinnah went to London. There was difference of opinion about creation of part 'C' States, comprising Bengal and Assam, Jinnah held that this should be done only after a constitution for

part 'C' States had been enacted. This was agreed to by the British Government and a communique was issued to this effect.

Maulana Azad joined the Interim Government as Minister of Education on July 15, 1947. When the League joined the Ministry, the Congress decided to offer it the portfolio of Finance. This was a blunder and Maulana Azad was totally opposed to it but he did not like to enter into a controversy with his colleagues. Jinnah pounced upon this opportunity and nominated Liaqat Ali Khan who was immediately at loggerheads with all other Ministers and, till August, 1947, no proposal from any Ministry was cleared by Finance. Liaqat Ali Khan also presented a budget that would have discredited the Congress. These irritations exasperated the Congress leaders and they began to consider seriously that partition would perhaps be a better choice.

Lord Mountbatten took over as Viceroy on March 23, 1947. The belief that the country should be divided to ward off riots and conflicts had already gained ground. Maulana Azad was highly concerned at this reversal of his life's dream. He appealed to Gandhiji, with no effect. As he says, he pleaded with Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel that the country must not be divided. But they had already reached the conclusion that partition was preferable to the daily bickering that they were facing in the Interim Government. Azad canvassed a number of people, including Lord Mountbatten, before the latter left for London with his final recommendations. Azad sincerely believed that the Cabinet Mission Plan should be adopted as it was for the good of all sections in the country because it would retain the unity of the country so dear to Azad and thus save his generation the derision of the future generations. But his efforts were of no avail. Ultimately, on June 4, 1947, a White Paper was issued proposing the partition of the country and the provinces.

During his last meeting with Lord Mountbatten, Azad had provided him with a number of useful suggestions. Incidentally some good proposals have been detailed by Dr. Rajendra Prasad in his *India Divided*. He had indicated that the unit of division

should be the population of a district and had anticipated the boundary commission which appeared in the shape of the Radcliffe Commission.

It was finally decided that a referendum should be undertaken in the North West Frontier Province. This referendum was boycotted by the Khudai Khidmatgars with the result that even this Congress-ruled province was handed over to the Muslim League. This must rank as one of the great injustices of this Award.

Lord Mountbatten expeditiously put through the plan of partition. Pakistan was created on August 14 and India became free on August, 15, 1947.

Maulana Azad, the inflexible advocate of Indian unity, was the saddest man at this turn of events. Acharya Kripalani has stated in his book *Gandhi—His Life and Thought* that Maulana Azad was not opposed to the division of the country. Acharya Kripalani's assumption is based on the fact that Maulana Azad had mentioned that he had made his feelings clear to Mahatma Gandhi but he (Kripalani) did not know anything about it. It is indeed surprising that Kripalani, who had worked closely with Maulana Azad for years, had no knowledge of Azad's views on this issue, had no inkling of Azad's trend of thoughts in politics, nor of his constant differences with the Muslim League which resulted in the creation of the Muslim Nationalist Party and the guidance that Azad provided to the Jamait-ul-Ulema. Azad's whole life was a negation of the two-nation theory and an affirmation of the Indian nationhood. He tried his best to reject partition during the negotiations with the Cripps Mission and the Cabinet Mission. However, Azad was a great disciplinarian. When his companions accepted partition, when he found that the majority was against him, he bowed before the party decision. And this he did only after fighting this decision with his full might. But the circumstances were against him and success eluded him. He failed while those who exploited religion

to mislead the masses, succeeded. In a way, Azad was born before his time, in an age when the country's political consciousness was as immature as its understanding of the real spirit of religion.

Thus it was that Azad acquiesced in the decision regarding partition with great pain and sorrow. He had often dared to differ with Mahatma Gandhi, but, being a true democrat, he always bowed before the decision of the majority in the Working Committee. To infer from this that Azad was not opposed to partition is a calumny. Scores of speeches and writings fully reveal Azad's mentality, his religious and political ideology and how he held India's unity to be something sacred. The speeches at Lucknow and on the steps of the Jama Masjid at Delhi reveal the real agony of his heart (for a translation of the Jama Masjid speech please see the Appendix).

Minister of Education

IN SEPTEMBER 1946 when the Interim Government was constituted without the Muslim League, Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders were keen that Maulana Azad should join the Cabinet, but Azad suggested Asaf Ali's name instead. When Asaf Ali came to know of it, he too tried his best to persuade Maulana Azad to accept the ministership but Azad remained adamant. In January 1947, however, when Dr. Rajendra Prasad quitted the Cabinet on being elected President of the Constituent Assembly, his vacancy had to be filled. At this time, Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru were able to persuade Azad to take over the portfolio of Education from C. Rajagopalachari. This he did on January 15, 1947, and he retained this portfolio till his death on February 22, 1958. Maulana Azad was elected to the Lok Sabha from the Rampur constituency in 1952 and from the Gurgaon constituency in 1957.

There could be no better teacher of manners, morals and human values than Azad. Endowed with learning and scholarship, he was not only a thinker and a wise person but also blessed with a temperament that was impervious to the ups and downs of life. He had attained the stage where wealth had no attraction for him and poverty no terror. Consequently, the post of Minister of Education was most suitable for him, though he accepted it after great hesitation.

The leaders of the newly-freed nation realized that it was of essence to reform the educational system laid down by the British

rulers and to cultivate certain desirable values and ways of thinking in the emerging generation. Azad was aware that to lay down the outlines of a meaningful system of education it was essential to have a clear conception of the meaning and purpose of human existence. Although his various speeches and writings discuss this basic theme, a comprehensive statement of his views is available in the address he gave at a UNESCO symposium on “The Concept of Man and the Educational Philosophy in East and West.”

Azad’s penetrating eyes do not see any basic difference in the philosophies of East and West, nor does he hold one superior to the other. But he discovers that important differences do exist in their mental and emotional attitudes which are related to the theories and concepts of human nature provided by the respective thinkers of East and West. The great thinkers of the West – Darwin, Freud and Marx, tried to discover truth in their vastly different ways. But they failed to do so. The eastern philosophers went round and round in the labyrinth of Sufism and Vedanta. They realised the heights which man could attain but they got entangled in fatalism. Azad based his educational philosophy on the principle that there should be a bridge between the East and the West and one should not accept or reject anything old or new without applying to it the test of reason.

The impress of Azad’s thinking was felt in almost every field of education. Without his guidance, it is doubtful whether free India’s culture and education would have remained free of distortion. Azad laid emphasis on adult education and expanded its dimension. He promoted research in eastern learning and literature and set up the three Akademies to develop the fine arts. It was he who started work on the compilation of technical terms in Hindi on a large scale. It was he who resisted the emotional approach to the issue of the medium of instruction and the conflict between Hindi and non-Hindi protagonists. It was he who established the University Grants Commission and through it safeguarded the autonomy of the universities and made

available larger funds for higher education. It was he who declared that women's education was more important than men's because it could create a new consciousness and a new life in the whole nation.

Much had been said for and against the need of religious education, but none could be more aware of its need and importance than Maulana Azad. However, in the context of the conditions prevailing in the country and for certain other considerations, he decided that it would not be wise to impart religious instruction officially in government schools. At the same time he realised that the true spirit of religion should permeate not only education but every sphere of life and through it people should learn tolerance and broadmindedness and develop a strong bond of sympathy for fellow human beings.

The underlying objectives of Azad's life were to spread communal unity and to provide proper education and training for India's welfare. He set about promoting a balanced outlook among the Indians and to fill their hearts with love and tolerance for each other. In this context, his achievement has had few parallels in the Indian history.

Azad set up the following boards/commissions during his tenure:

1. The University Education Commission (Set up 1948, Report 1949).
2. The Secondary Education Commission (Set up 1952, Report 1953).
3. All India Council for Technical Education (Reorganised to set up a chain of national laboratories throughout the country).
4. Kharagpur Institute of Higher Technology.
5. University Grants Commission.

Maulana Azad had the foresight to perceive that technical education was essential for India's progress and development. Addressing the Central Advisory Board of Education on February 6, 1958 he said (in what proved to be his last speech):

“When I assumed charge of education in 1947, I immediately saw that there could be no solution of our educational problems without the fullest cooperation of the Centre and the Provinces. Education was no doubt a provincial subject but it was my considered opinion that this distinction could be maintained only when our educational targets have been achieved. Till such time, the Central Government should openly recognise that though education is a State subject, it must share this responsibility with the State Government if we are to meet the challenge of the times.”

When Azad took over the Education portfolio, its budget was only two crore rupees. Gradually he succeeded in having it increased to more than Rs. 30 crore. Azad held that the objective of our Five Year Plans was not only to increase agricultural and industrial production, power, transport, communications etc., but to provide a proper mental climate and requisite training for the people in general and the younger generation in particular in order to produce better citizens. No amount of material progress would be of any earthly use, he felt, if we lagged behind in education. Azad held that there was no dearth of talent, scientific or otherwise, in India, and it only needed proper encouragement and cultivation. He was, in a way, preoccupied with scientific and technical education. His broad vision however is reflected in the speech he gave in 1950 at the meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Education. He indicated that with a view to raising the standards of technical education it was proposed that in addition to the expansion and development of existing institutions, four institutes of higher technology should be set up. The Eastern Higher Technological Institute near Calcutta was being expanded although it did not have even its own building till then.

On October 19, 1945, the government accepted in principle the Sargent Report which had recommended that a National Council of Technical Education be set up for development of technical education. The Council was set up as an Advisory

Board on November 30, 1945 under the Chairmanship of the late N.R. Sarkar. In 1953, the Constitution of this Council was amended and the Minister of Education was made its President. On February 8, 1953, while assuming the Presidentship of the Council, Maulana Azad said:

“As Minister of Education I have naturally been interested in its (the Council’s) working and I am happy, my association with the Council will henceforth be much closer than it has been in the past. Some of the landmarks in the history of the Council naturally come to my mind on this occasion. You are aware that it was primarily at the initiative of the Council that the Government of India decided to strengthen a number of undergraduate institutions in various parts of the country by providing grants amounting to about one and a half crore rupees. It was also on the recommendation of the Council that the Government accepted the proposals of the Sarkar Committee to set up four higher institutes of technology in the country. The Council is also responsible for undertaking steps to establish closer relations between industries and educational institutions by establishing different types of industrial training schemes.”

Maulana Azad was willing to extend help for development of technical training in every possible way, whether it be for expansion of existing building, acquisition of equipment or recruitment of teachers trained in the new methods of education. He acquired, through the courtesy of the West Bengal Government, a plot of 1200 acres in Hoogly near Calcutta for setting up the Eastern Higher Technological Institute. The plot contained a collectorate building and some other houses where political prisoners were detained in the pre-independence days. Soon, however, these houses were replaced by teachers’ quarters and lecture halls. Inaugurating the Kharagpur Institute of Technology on August 18, 1951 Azad said:

“One of the first decisions I took on assuming charge was that we must so improve the facilities for higher technical

education in the country that we would ourselves meet most of our needs. The large number of our youngemen who had been going abroad for higher training could have received such training in the country itself. Indeed, I looked and still look forward to the day when the facilities for technical education in India will be of such a level that people from abroad will come to India for higher scientific and technical training.”

The Kharagpur Institute was one of Azad’s achievements. In July, 1955 when the first batch of hundreds of successful students passed through its gate, each of them had already received many offers of employment. This proved how accurate Azad was in assessing the country’s needs.

Not content with this, Maulana Azad set up a Committee in 1947, under Sir Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar, to assess the country’s requirements of scientific and technical workers for the next ten years and to recommend measures to provide them. The progress attained by India in this context may be measured by the following table:

	1947	1950	1955
(i) <i>Engineering Studies</i>			
Number of degree level Institutes	28	37	43
Intake	2520	3337	5000
Out-turn	950	1700	3000
(ii) <i>Technology</i>			
Number of degree level Institute	16	24	25
Intake	420	782	1050
Out-turn	320	498	700

In the domain of fine arts, Maulana Azad was particularly fond of poetry and was himself a poet, but he was also a connoisseur of music and painting. It was, therefore, natural that he set up the three academies – Sahitya Akademi, Lalit Kala Akademi and Sangeet Natak Akademi.

These Akademies, run by separate Councils are fully financed by the Government. The senior-most amongst them, the Sahitya Akademi, was inaugurated on March 12, 1954. Its aim is to promote Indian literature and eminent men of letters are on its Executive Council. There are separate Boards for the main languages and, to patronize and encourage writers, the Akademi gives annual awards of Rs. 5000 for the best book in each language.

The Sangeet Natak Akademi promotes Hindustani and Karnatak music by honouring deserving vocalists and instrumentalists with Presidential awards and honours. The maestros in dance and drama are also awarded in similar manner.

The Lalit Kala Akademi concerns itself with the promotion and development of painting, sculpture and allied arts.

Under the guidance of Maulana Azad, India became one of the founder-members of UNESCO. Inaugurating the Indian National Commission for UNESCO on April 9, 1949, Maulana Azad said that UNESCO fulfilled a great need and had done remarkably well since it was founded three years ago. India, on her part, had cooperated with UNESCO in an admirable manner and many UNESCO projects were underway in India. Classics from various countries of the world were being translated into Indian languages. The scope of exchange of scientific information and cooperation had been widened. A large number of Indian professors and scholars were holding high posts in UNESCO and India could be proud of the fact that Dr. Radhakrishnan had been elected President of the Executive Council of UNESCO.

In June, 1951, speaking at the Paris session of UNESCO, Maulana Azad gave an inspiring address. His main emphasis was that UNESCO could succeed in promoting a willingness among various countries to understand each other's culture with a view to creating harmony and accord, it would be a great achievement because cultural accord would naturally lead to accord on political and economic levels. On January 8, 1954, addressing the Indian National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO,

Maulana Azad ventilated the grievance of the eastern countries that UNESCO and its institutions were not paying due attention to them. At the same time, Maulana Azad declared in another speech, the UNESCO provided a ray of hope for peace and amity in this world.

The printed speeches of Maulana Azad are not his political or religious addresses. They are mostly those speeches that he delivered as Minister of Education. Even so they cover a wide range of subjects such as history, music, dance, drama, education, technical education, public schools, UNESCO, the concept of man in the East and the West, roads and progress, science, Indian literature, and many others.

Yet another achievement of Maulana Azad was the setting up of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations with the object of establishing and improving cultural relations with other countries. The Council publishes an Arabic quarterly called *Thaqafat-ul-Hind*, and its first editor was the late Maulana Abdur Razzak Malihabadi. This journal was issued with a view to making the West Asian countries conscious of India's culture and civilization. Another journal called the *Indo-Asia* is published in English and is circulated in those Asian countries where English is understood. It has the same object as *Thaqafat-ul-Hind*. The Council also distributes a large number of books in other countries with a view to introducing the people of those countries to Indian culture, civilization and literature.

Maulana Azad served the country in various capacities. Besides being the Education Minister, he was the Deputy Leader of the Congress Party in Parliament and a principal adviser to the Prime Minister. There is no doubt that the name of this honoured writer, politician and thinker will never lose its luster in Indian history.

Finally, the present writer would like to quote an abstract from an article of Dr. K.G. Saiyidain, published in the *Education Quarterly* and reproduced in the book on Maulana Azad released by the Publications Divisions.

“Maulana was first and last an educationist. The secret of his success as an educationist lay in the fact that he practiced in his life what he preached in his works. He had the qualities of character and intellect which he wished to inculcate in the people of his country. His whole life bore a shining stamp of sincerity and truth—truth which he loved and advocated with Socratic passion; truth which makes no compromise with expediency and no concessions to ill-informed criticism or opposition, however bitter it might be...

“As a Minister, who presided over the educational destinies of the country since the attainment of independence, he has left the impress of his great personality in many directions.

“His humanism could not reconcile itself to the fact that many groups and classes should be debarred from full participation in the growing life of the country, because centuries of social neglect and tyranny had deprived them of their human rights. In order to equalize and democratize opportunity, several schemes of scholarship were initiated of which the most noticeable was one for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other Backward Classes for which the financial provision was raised from Rs. 300,000 to Rs. 20 million during his regime.

“. . . Through the growing relationship with UNESCO in the cause of peace and international understanding and through the promotion of cultural exchanges with many foreign countries, cultural activities received a new stimulus in the country and Indian culture a new recognition and respect abroad. As a writer and a man of culture, he was sensitive to the financial plight of writers, artists and others working in the field of culture and he sponsored a scheme under which those in really indigent circumstances could be given financial assistance.

“He had a phased programme formulated for the development of Hindi but insisted that it should be so implemented as to give

no cause for grievance or apprehension to other national languages, which were equally dear to him. When, in the first flush of freedom and nationalism, many who had themselves received western education wanted to oust English or at least relegate it to the background, this man of vision, who was himself a product of the traditional system of eastern education, insisted that English should be retained and given an important place in our national life.

“He was, above all, deeply interested in the welfare of the teacher community and worked hard not only to improve their financial condition but also to raise their social status...

“I recall with poignant interest the words that he spoke at the last meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Education only a fortnight before his death:

‘Whatever may be the system that we may adopt, there can be no real improvement without an improvement in the quality of our teachers. One of the main achievements in the Second Five-Year Plan has been the improvement of salary scales of teachers in the Primary and Basic schools...

‘While these measures have gone a good deal to raise the morale of teachers, some of the good effects have been lost because of constant and carping criticism of our existing teachers. I know that many of them are ill-trained and some have come to the profession only as a last resort, but at the same time we must recognise that in spite of great difficulties they have served the nation well...’

“But as a man, the Maulana was even greater than his work as a Minister. With what grace and dignity and sense of justice did he preside over our activities! Never interfering in details, not even greatly interested in them, unless they impinged in some way on principles or policy; always ready to help and encourage, always willing to overlook faults and weaknesses except when they encroached in any way of the

public interest or the integrity of administration; always shunning personal publicity, sometimes even with indignation. He would not even accept honorary degrees from the universities. If I remember it right, he had only once accepted such a degree in the early years of his ministership.

“The same sympathy and understanding and absence of a doctrinaire approach which enabled him to deal with complex political situations guided him in the educational field and kept the keel of our educational ship steady.”

It also redounds to Azad's foresight and credit that he always appointed one educationist as Secretary in the Ministry of Education. Accordingly, as long as he remained Minister of Education, his Secretaries were eminent educationists like Dr. Tara Chand, Professor Humayun Kabir and K.G. Saiyidain.*

Writer and Scholar

JOSH MALIHABADI, the noted Urdu poet and writer, once told Azad: “You actually belong to our tribe. Your uniform is still lying with us. Why did you put on the livery of politics?” Despite the underlying truth of Josh’s remark, the contribution of Azad to literature and learning is of no mean significance. Niaz Fatehpuri, another scholar, paid his tribute to Maulana Azad in these words:

“Had he devoted himself to Arabic poetry, he would have been another Mutaunnabi or Badiuzzamani. Had he devoted himself only to religious and theological reform he would have been the Ibne Taimiyya of his era. Had he occupied himself solely with philosophical studies, he would not have ranked less than Ibne Rushd (Averros) and Ibne Khalil. Had he turned to Persian poetry, he would have been equal to Urfi and Naziri. Had he inclined towards Sufism and moral uplift, he would have been equal to Ghazali and Rumi.”

Indeed Azad was endowed with extraordinary mental and intellectual capacities though, because of his retiring nature, these talents were never fully known to the public at large. At best he was recognized as the editor of *Al-Hilal* and *Al-Balagh*, the author of *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* and the orator of *Tazkira* and *Ghubar-e-Khatir*. In fact, however, he was a many-sided genius who had the capacity to contribute creatively to any field of his choice. He was interned at an early age. When released, he

became deeply involved in politics which left him little leisure. Even so his books and writings are fairly large in number.

(1) *Elan-e-Haq*, (2) *Musalman Aurat*, (3) *Taza Mazamine-Maulana Abu'l Kalam Azad* (4) *Masalaa-e-Khilafat aur Jazirat Arab*, (5) *Qaul-e-Faisal*, (6) *Khutbat-e-Azad*, (7) *Taqarir*, (8) *Navadir-e-Abul Kalam*, (9) *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, (10) *Tazkira*, (11) *Azad ki Kahani*, (12) *India Wins Freedom*, (13) *Ghubar-e-Khatir*, (14) *Karawane Khayal*, (15) *Naqshe Azad*, (16) *Makatib-e-Abu'l Kalam*, (17) *Faisla-e-Muqaddamaa-e-Jama Masjid, Calcutta*, (18) *Malirkotla ka Niza*, (19) *Sarmad Shahid*, (20) *National Tahrik* (MS), (21) *Alberuni aur Gughrafiye Aalam* (MS), and (22) *Mutafarriq Khutut* (MS).

Dr. Nafisi, the learned Professor of Tehran University, has written at great length about Maulana Azad's erudition. After meeting him, Dr. Nafisi paid a tribute not only to Azad's Persian scholarship but also to his ability to converse fluently and faultlessly in Persian. Azad used to quote Persian scholars and thinkers very often, says Nafisi, and he was most learned in the cultural history of Persia. Indeed Azad was an extremely accomplished and learned scholar. Dr. Nafisi recounted to Azad the well-known anecdote of the grammarian and the boatman while they were sailing in the boat. The grammarian asked the seaman, "Do you know any grammar?" "None", he said. "Half of your life has been wasted", said the grammarian. Soon after there arose a storm and the boatman asked the grammarian, "Do you know how to swim?" "No", he replied. "Your whole life has been wasted and you are going to lose it", said the boatman. Azad chuckled and said, "This story has been recounted by Rumi in his famous *Mathnavi*", and then he proceeded to recite the whole story in Rumi's verse.

Azad's memory was phenomenal and the range of his studies very wide. He was, therefore, able to quote thousands of Urdu and Persian verses in his writings. Once a friend, Maulana Ghulam Rasul Mehr, questioned the accuracy of

Azad's quotation and amended it a little. In one of his letters, Azad writes,

“I had read that verse about 30 years ago. Today, fortunately, I came across the original book and discovered that, by the Grace of God, the verse was exactly as I had quoted it.”

Among Azad's writings, *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* occupies the pride of place. He had realised the need of a rational commentary on the Quran and even started working at it while he was still young and proving his mettle in *All-Hilal*. The travails he had to undergo in this regard have already been described. Ultimately, however, the translation and commentary of only 18 chapters of the Quran could be published after a long lapse of time. There is some evidence that he had translated the remaining 12 chapters also but no manuscript was found after his death and it was difficult to say where he had completed the task, though he mentioned it in some letters to Ghulam Rasul Mehr.

The Quran, as seen and interpreted by Maulana Azad, is a complete moral code and a comprehensive set of directives for personal and social behaviour. The first noteworthy translation of the Quran in India was the Persian version rendered by Shah Waliullah. This translation, made boldly and with great insight, laid the foundations of a new school of thought. His son, Shah Abdul Qadir, translated the Persian version made by his father into Urdu, at the beginning of the 19th century. Shah Waliullah's translation made it easier for the Quran to be translated into other languages in India. He also made it clear that the Quran was not something to be kept safe and secure in the folds of a silken handkerchief. On the other hand, it was necessary to carry its message to the people. Shah Waliullah was against those who followed religious precepts blindly. It was his desire to coordinate the teachings of Islam with the principles of human welfare and for this it was necessary to cleanse the Islamic principles of the myths and false legends which had crept into them.

Azad was deeply influenced by the objective approach of Shah Waliullah. At first he was also influenced by Imam Ghazali's efforts at revivalism. Then he came under the spell of Imam Ibne Taimiyya who 150 years after Ghazali (661-728) gave a new turn to *Hadith*, *Fiqh*, the rational subjects, logic, philosophy and rhetoric. Perhaps the greatest influence of Azad was that of Ibne Taimiyya who did not want Islam to be tainted by Greek influences. As Maulana Akhtar Ali Tilahri says:

“Maulana Azad had a number of Quranic commentaries before him which he studied with a probing mind. He was fully aware of the imperfections that had crept into these commentaries for various reasons. His taste for Arabic was like that of a pure Arab. He had great power of assimilation and was free from any layers of artificiality. His mind was healthy and alert, his wit penetrating and his memory a storehouse of witty arguments, wise sayings and anecdotes. The study of the Quran had developed into a great passion with him. Consequently, he was able to translate, with great love and devotion, 18 chapters of the Quran in his peerless and exquisite style. He embellished this translation with notes and comments, short and long, according to the occasion and the need. Whatever Azad has written commands highest respect. His writings have advanced the cause of thinking and opened new vistas of thought and opinion. They have promoted religious insight and cleansed Islam, by strong reasoning and convincing explanations, of superstition which had introduced a number of old wives tales into it and of fiction i.e. ancient historic events narrated in the guise of stories. Azad exposed those commentators who had knuckled down to Greek philosophy and had tried to explain Islam in its terms. It is this quality of Azad's commentary which makes it unique and without a peer in its field. In the earlier period, the apex of the commentators' efforts was attained in Imam Razi's *Tafsee-re-Kabir*. One can hardly deny the capacity of Imam Razi to unravel the finer points of an issue or to make new points in

argument, but the major portion of his achievements seems to be adapted from Greek philosophy. Imam Razi fully deserves the title of the “Leader of the Doubters”, but it is one thing to unravel knots and another to create them. Imam Razi often creates complications where none existed before and then he goes on his way nonchalantly without bothering to resolve these complications. That is why the scholars say of him that his objections are in cash but his replies are in credit.

“Azad, on the other hand, is a commentator of a different type. He does not create problems for their own sake; nor does he add to the pages of his book unimportant or farfetched matters. He discusses vital and useful issues pertaining to the understanding of the Quran and when he takes up an issue, he carries it to its logical end, and a conclusion. *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* is a highly successful commentary due to Azad’s amazingly vast store of knowledge, his clarity of mind, his strong memory and his extraordinary power of expression and communication.”

The first volume of *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, which provided a commentary on *Surat-a-Fatiha* only, was published in 1931. The second volume, released in 1936 from the Madina Press, Bijnore, covered 18 chapters. It is not known what happened to the third volume. However, even if Azad had published only the first volume, he would have earned an abiding name in the field of commentary.

The Sahitya Akademi has recently published the *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* in a new edition, in three volumes, by dividing the second volume in two parts.

Maulana Azad had labored hard and long in studying the Quran. As he himself says:

“I devoted about 23 years of my life in studying the Quran. I have deliberated over every chapter, every verse, every phrase and word in the Quran. I can claim to have studied the larger part of all the commentaries, published or unpublished. I have

also undertaken thorough investigation of the various aspects of the Quranic philosophy.”

Reviewing *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, Maulana Syed Sulaiman Nadvi wrote:

“Among the Quranic commentaries I have read, I consider those by Ibne Taimiyya and Ibne Qayyam as the best. The learned author of *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* deserves our congratulations particularly because living in the shadow of European imperialism he has dared follow in the footsteps of Ibne Taimiyya and Ibne Qayyam who had set an example by resisting the Mongol conquerors.”

Commenting on the fundamental unity of religions, Azad writes:

“The fundamental concept of all religions is belief in the existence of God. All the religions teach the same truth and the worship of God is ingrained in human nature. Thus differences in religion are created by three factors; dispute over the attributes of God, difference in modes of worship, and difference in religious laws. These differences are created by time and circumstance, by environment. None doubts the existence of God.”

Again, says Azad:

“Men want to live under an organized law based on goodness and they are guided by the prophets of God.”

Next to *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, *Tazkira* is the most important book written by Azad. It has been mentioned that when Azad was interned in Ranchi, Fazluddin Ahmad who was not only the publisher of *Al-Hilal* and *Al-Balagh* but also a personal friend of Azad, visited him and persuaded him to write an autobiography and send him the manuscript in instalments. In a lucky moment Azad agreed to do so but he started by writing about one of his ancestors, Sheikh Jamaluddin, a great scholar and saint who lived during the reign of Akbar the Great. The *Tazkira* represents the first chapter of Azad's autobiography. The second chapter was about Jamaluddin's son, Sheikh Mohammad Afzal and a great grandfather, Maulana Munawwaruddin. Azad did complete these

three chapters, and sent them to Fazluddin Ahmad but after the latter's death in 1922, the last two chapters were lost and could not be printed.

There are quite a few autobiographies in Urdu, notable among them being Maulana Jafar Thanos Ali's *Kala Pani*, Zaheer Dehlavi's *Dastan-e-Ghadr*, Chaudhri Afzal Haq's *Mera Afsana*, Bhai Permanand's autobiography, Ranbir's *Phansi Ki Kothri*, Raza Ali's *Aamal Nama*, Hasan Nizami's *Aap Beeti*, Hasrat Mohani's *Quid-e-Farang*. Azad's book is an autobiography in name only, it is more of a sustained discussion on religions, society, philosophy, morals and politics.

Though *Tazkira* is about Sheikh Jamaluddin, the autobiographical element was introduced when concluding his remarks about the loftiness of Jamaluddin's person and character. Azad talks about his own turbulent youth and says a lot in allusions and metaphors:

“When I beheld the upright stature of the cypress, felt sad because I could not emulate its example by towering heads and shoulders above all. When I looked at the humility and the lack of airs of the trodden blade of grass, I was ashamed of my own vanity and self-esteem. When I felt the soft flow of the morning breeze, I grew frustrated with my immobility and longed to wander and travel. When I considered how uncontrolled and unmalleable was the running water, I wept and my heart bled at the fetters' smile, my eyes brimmed over with tears of sympathy. Whenever the trees swayed and the boughs rejoiced and danced, I remembered my own inertness and apathy. In short, there was no dearth of promptings and no lack of capacity on my part. But while the lightning struck and the clouds thundered on, alas, my sleep was almost death-like and the back on which I reclined in my torpor kept waiting for a strong lash of the whip for an awakening. As the poet says:

‘Due to my extreme weakness,
The words of prayer never reached my lips,

*Even though God's Mercy was only
awaiting to hear those words,
To forgive me.'*

*It is better to say openly:
'I proclaim loud and clear
Not for me the secret whispers'*

that waywardness of action leads to licentiousness and waywardness of faith leads to apostacy, that there was no variety of licence and apostacy which I was not fated to experience. Indeed what else is licentiousness but apostacy carried to an extreme:

*'When on Doomsday I will be called
to account for my sins,
Registers, wherein the sins of the rest
of the world are entered,
Will be torn and thrown away.'*

Elsewhere, Maulana Azad writes:

“The world does not change for anybody; but if you change yourself, you will find it totally different. The world that you see in your crumpled old age, is it the same that you beheld in your youth? Does this ordinary world that you see in the sad morn of parting bear any resemblance to the glorious vision you saw when you met your beloved in the early hours of the night?

*'Does it not seem
As if the whole earth and the skies
have been transformed?'*

“If you cannot entertain the allusions I have made, please don't reject them altogether. Give me the benefit of your doubt. Actually even I can neither comprehend nor express fully what befell my eyes and my heart. Even if I speak in metaphors, substituting a smile for the lighting and the silver powder that adorns the parting of the bride's hair for the stars, who on earth will be able to follow me?”

And finally, it is difficult to resist the temptation to give here a rather long but necessary extract from the *Tazkira* for it

brings out—to the extent possible in an English rendering—the exquisite beauty of Azad’s prose and recounts the climax of his worldly love and its ultimate frustration.

“All praise to the Lord who works in mysterious ways and extends a helping hand towards those who have been led astray. For long had the Divine Grace been exerting its attraction; it was my own dormant self that held me back. For long had the Divine Vision been shining in full splendour; it was my own distorted sight that stood in the way of perception. Heaven’s mercy had been calling me repeatedly; but its voice was not heeded by my heart in the tumult raised by the senses.

“The shock of unrequited love opened my eyes, as if in a different world, which had its own ravishing visions. It was not the same sky, nor the same horizon. It was not the same earth, nor the same people. Even the hand that led me to this new place had disappeared. As if it were a lamp which lit the way in the gloom of the night, and was put out with the advent of the morn, being no longer required;

*‘When love blew its trumpet, loud and clear,
Not only faith and religion
But even heresy, that was waiting to pounce upon me,
Took to its heels’*

“This, in short, was what I felt I saw. As for the ears, when I listened closely I found that the whole universe, inside and outside, was resounding with these words:

*Thou art being hailed from the ramparts
of the Heavens,
What art thou tarrying,
In this prison-house,
Called the earth?*

“The same earth that had once stupefied me in her tavern of forgetfulness, which had constantly beguiled my eyes and bewitched my ears, was now glowing with vitality in every nook and corner, and transmitting the ability and the insight to perceive truth.

“Every particle spoke. Every leaf was like a letter. Flowers opened their lips. The stones rolled up to point out something. The trodden dust rose and strewed the air with pearls. The skies had to come down often to resolve my queries. The earth had to be tossed up many a time to pluck the stars from the heavens. Angels held me by the arms that I might not falter. The sun came to light my way that I might not stumble. All the veils were taken off. All the curtains were torn to shreds. All the brows nodded. All the eyes told tales. All the hands were extended. I caught hold of the cloud and found it a melodic instrument of life. I beckoned the lightning near and found it a revealing smile on the lips of the eternal mystery. I gathered all the gusts of winds in my fists and they yet remained empty. All the waves of the seven seas could not fill my two cupped hands. It seemed as if the night had been abolished for I sought gloom far and wide, and found it nowhere. I went in search of sleep and forgetfulness, and none knew their address. I closed my eyes and a world of glorious spectacles unfolded itself. Whenever I closed my ears, they were filled with delicious sounds and melodies. The sun boasted saying that it was millions of miles away. A ray of light shot up from the Arctic region and declared it traversed 1,86,000 miles in a second. But it could not equal even the initial glance of my eyes. And my heart smiled and said that when the message of love flies on the wings of desire, the speed of light appears like the faltering steps of the lame. In short, the dormant aspirations woke up and the heart that I had given up in despair returned to me with new powers and provisions. There was nothing in the universe of animate or inanimate beings which frowned unpleasantly or looked deceptively. All the tongues spoke out. All the gestures were explicit. All the writings were bold and legible. No lips remained closed. No visions were veiled. And my eyes took in everything they saw, and the ears treasured everything they heard. To cut a long story short, the heart absorbed everything that the eyes saw or the ears heard.”

This poetic and eloquent extract from Azad is more revealing than any formal confession. Indeed he has freely confessed his partiality for a life of pleasures. That he does not provide details is immaterial. In any case, to admit the charges of heresy and licentiousness requires courage of the highest order.

The story of this period of Azad's life is corroborated by Maulana Abdur Razzak Malihabadi in *Zikr-e-Azad*. Abdur Razzak was a close companion of Azad for a long time and it cannot be said of him:

*'The Divine Secret that holy men never
imparted to anyone,
I wonder how the wine-seller came to know them?'*

He tried to persuade Azad to write a complete autobiography including the episodes of pleasures and indulgence. He argued with Azad, cited the instance of Tolstoy and Rousseau, entreated and wheedled till one day Azad relented and Abdur Razzak could say:

*'The phoenix of success
Was entrapped in my net'.*

Azad dictated the momentous chapter to Abdur Razzak but asked for it the next day for revision and probably changed his mind as the revised chapter was never returned to Abdur Razzak who says, "I cannot betray a friend's confidence. Hence, though I mention it, I have actually buried it in my heart."

Tazkira was the first book of Azad to be published. Had Fazluddin Ahmad not died early, the remaining two chapters of Azad's life would also have been printed along with a couple of tracts. But after Fazluddin's death all these manuscripts disappeared.

Strictly speaking, *Tazkira* is not an autobiography, but it does contain revelations about Azad's life up to the time it was written. The style is largely oracular but when one writes from the depths of one's heart, it is bound to be so.

Tazkira is not only autobiographical, it discusses religion, philosophy, logic, history, Shaikh Wasti, Imam Ibne Taimiyya, the life of the prophets and various other topics.

Ghubar-e-Khatir is Azad's last book. After writing it, the preoccupations with politics gave him no time for writing. It is a collection of letters which Maulana Azad wrote, while imprisoned at the Ahmadnagar Fort, to Nawab Sadr Yar Jung Habibur Rahman Khan Sherwani. Actually these letters were written as a pastime, for they were never posted, nor were they meant to be posted.

Azad first met Habibur Rahman Sherwani in 1905 at Lucknow, through Maulana Shibli, and they retained their friendly, literary and intellectual contacts till Azad's death.

When Azad was released from the Ahmadnagar Jail, his Secretary, Ajmal Khan prevailed upon him to get them printed. These letters—it would be more correct to call them essays—provide a keen analysis of life and reveal great truths hidden behind the commonplace. They do not have the note of youthful self-esteem that was apparent in *Al-Hilal*, *Al-Balagh* or *Tazkira*. On the other hand, these letters convey, in balanced and dignified manner, the essence of Azad's mature experience. The Urdu critic, Dr Syed Abdullah, who admired the fiery prose of Azad's youth, erroneously considers that *Ghubar-e-Khatir* marks the decline of Azad's literary powers.

It is possible that Azad was prompted to write these letters by the example of the French writer, Charles Loti Montesque's book *Persian Letters* in which two imaginary Persian travelers make ironic comments on the French civilization in general and the Persian culture in particular. Anyway, Azad was not constrained by any regular plot or outline. He wrote as and when the idea or the mood occurred. He selected an addressee who was well worth the honour, for Maulana Habibur Rahman Sherwani was the Head of the Religious Affairs and of Translation Bureau of the Nizam's Government at Hyderabad,

where he had been awarded the title of Nawab Sadr Yar Jung. These letters reveal many a new facet of Azad's personality. For the first time we come to know of Azad's love of music and that he could even play the sitar. As he says:

“Let me tell you something, I have often probed the depths of my own heart and discovered that I can probably do without the necessities of life and yet be happy, but I cannot do without music. The musical note is the prop of my existence, it soothes me after mental exertion and cures all the ills of my heart and body. Imagine the quietude of night, the shadowy stars, the immovable marble dome bathed in the moonlight, the silvery waves of the Jamuna rippling by, and in this work of light and shade imagine the plaintive notes rising from my sitar and floating freely on the air. The plectrum striking sparks of music and the heavens pouring down showers of stars.”

In letters No. 12 and 13, Azad discusses God. It is indeed a complex subject which has puzzled philosophers since the beginning of the concept and remains a question that begs solution. In these letters Azad talks in a very simple and attractive language. But while the style is direct and uncomplicated, he had taken great care to choose the words he has used.

Azad makes even such unpromising subjects as ‘The Story of the Crow and the Bulbul’ or ‘The Story of the Sparrows’, essays of such a high order as could hardly be rivaled in Urdu prose. These essays are also garnished, at places, with a delicate sense of humour. One of his fellow prisoners at Ahmadnagar, Dr. Syed Mahmud, used to feed the birds every morning, either out of some religious superstition or due to kindness of heart which impelled him to associate with these dumb creatures for a while as an antidote for the solitude of imprisonment. Azad describes this act as follows:

“Each morning he picked up a few crumbs and went out to the open courtyard. Then to the utmost limits of his voice he started shouting ‘Ah, Ah’ and flung these crumbs up into

the air. This open invitation was not able to attract the mynahs, but the cheeky beggars of the skies, the crows, began to crowd in. I have described the crows as beggars because I have never seen them go anywhere as guests, invited or uninvited. They always march like the *Fakirs*, purposefully, up to each door, utter their cries and march off.

“Anyway, as soon as Mr. Mahmud grew weary of saying ‘Ah, Ah’ and turned back, these greedy beggars immediately advanced and wiped the table clean in a trice. Even before Syed Mahmud cried, the crows were much in evidence with their musical chorus of ‘caw-caw’. When this feast was offered to them, the chorus grew into a thunderous orchestra. People bore with it for a couple of days. Then a delegation waited upon Syed Mahmud to plead with him that in case he could not restrain the generous impulse of his hands, he should at least postpone it for a few days, otherwise the depredation of the robbers would not let even those remain in peace who were trying to hide their heads in nooks and corners. It was also hinted that for the present only the crows of Ahmadnagar knew about this foodline, but if this free food continued, it would not be surprising if all the crows of South India invaded Ahmadnagar.”

In these letters Azad not only described how the prisoners spent their days in Ahmadnagar, he also revealed many things about himself, explicitly or implicitly. Description of the love of Aurangzeb, the man of iron, for the singing girl, Zainabadi, is quite meaningful.

In these letters Azad has also struck moral blows at religious superstitions and rituals and the conflicts between the creeds. About himself he says:

“I do not know what is Sunnism and what the Shias believe in. I have full faith in Allah and His book and I acclaim the Prophet. I have also been bestowed with reason and I go after established facts. What is white, remains white. What is black, remains black. No white cloth can become black if it is worn by

a certain group and no truth can become false, just because it is attributed to a certain person.”

In *Aasar-e-Abu'l Kalam* Qazi Abdul Ghaffar has commented on the letter captioned ‘The Story of the Sparrow’. He thinks that the point of contact between Azad’s high intelligence and the humble life of a sparrow could be established only because of Azad’s infinite love of nature and his capacity for minute observation. The light touch in which the story is told could be developed only by an author who has established a perfect coordination between his words and thoughts. Such instances are unique in literature. The story relates much more than the growth of self-awareness in a baby sparrow. One can envision the Ahmadnagar Fort populated by these birds in the same manner as by these prisoners with Azad observing minutely their daily life for recording the history of this family of birds and thus making them immortal.

It is significant that Azad made friends with the insignificant sparrows while the poet Iqbal adopted the eagle and the falcon as his symbols to teach the Muslims the lesson of self-awareness and power. Azad chose the character and habits of this innocent creature to convey message of goodness, innocence and constant endeavour for the betterment of the whole of humanity.

In a letter dated March 18, 1943, Azad describes how moved he was at the way the baby-bird learnt step by step to fly. He comments:

“Come to think of it, it was nothing but a demonstration of life’s common miracles. The baby-bird had developed the latent capacity to fly. It had come out of the cover of its nest and stood face to face with the boundless sky but it was yet unaware of its powers. As soon as the sense of self-awareness awakened, it realized in its bones that it was a flying creature. A breath of life ran through the lifeless frame. The drooping wings that had appeared lifeless began to quiver for a take-off. In the twinkling of an eye the surge to fly shook its whole

frame and it jumped off as if it had received a shock. The next moment all the bonds of weakness and helplessness had broken as under and the bird of courage was traversing the boundless space like an eagle.”

In the letter dated December 17, 1943, Azad has written a panegyric over tea. He took great pains in making tea and he writes about tea in a manner which is even more delightful than Ghalib's writings about wine. And he is profuse with apt quotations and verses too:

“And Now it is time for tea. But, alas, the tea which used to intoxicate my turbulent nature and sooth my careworn brow is beyond my reach. I am addicted to a particular brand of Chinese tea and the little stock I had with me was exhausted a few days ago. In the market places of Ahmadnagar and Poona, nobody seems to have heard of this priceless commodity. Consequently, I am forced to drink the hot brew of the Indian black-leaf which, according to the old saying. ‘To be contrary, that they have named the Abyssinian as Camphor’—is called tea and mixed with milk to manufacture a hot *sherbet*.”

Azad's partiality for tea is well known. He was a connoisseur of beverages. Interestingly, in a letter dated September 16, 1943 he said:

“Whatever I did, I did thoroughly. If I did good deeds, worthy of being rewarded in heavens, I did them exhaustively. If I committed sins, even then I did a good job. If I was foremost in the lane of wine drinkers, I was also the foremost among the pious and the upright. It is my nature that in whatever I undertake I strive to become perfect. Unlike the novices and the amateurs, I go straight towards my objective, undeterred by side-issues.”

Ghubar-e-Khatir excels in many things. There is no better or more reliable source for any biographer of Azad. There is no other book that provides such a wealth of details about Azad's

personal biodata, his family history, his education, his psychological make-up and the motivations that shaped his character. The style of the letter in it is crisp and balanced. They are not egoistical outpourings but thoughtful statements which provide meaningful insights in the ordinary happenings of everyday life.

Azad's article on Sarmad embodies research and interpretation of a high order. Sarmad, whose real name was Mohammad Saeed, possessed a most interesting personality. His parents were Armenian Jews and he was a master of the Bible and the Turah and had excellent command over Arabic and Persian. He had been taught by Fundrusky. After his conversion to Islam, he came to India as a trader. He fell in love with a young boy named Abhay Chand, became a mystic and in his frenzy began to wander around in a naked state.

Among the Persian poets who specialized in quatrains, Sarmad is ranked with Khayyam and Sahabi Najafi. After the execution of Dara Shikoh, Sarmad was accused of heresy at the instigation of Aurangzeb and was executed. Commenting on Muslim religious judges, Azad writes:

“During the 1300 years after the advent of Islam, the pen of the religious judges has been like a naked sword; thousands of persons have been killed because of their pronouncements. At any given period in the history of Islam, there are countless examples to show that whenever a ruler indulged in bloodshed, both the pen of the religious judge and the sword of military commander served him most loyally. It was not only the Sufis and the mystics who suffered. Even those pious men who were most punctilious about the form of religion and yet were blessed with insight into the divine mysteries were subjected to persecution by these judges and ultimately many of them paid with their blood for their unconventional beliefs. As the poet says:

*'When Naziri on the day of judgment,
Strode upto the eternal throne,
In a shroud strained with blood,
The multitude there wept pity and enquired,
Who had hurt him so grievously.'*

In short, if Azad had not got entangled in politics, he would have made many a garden bloom in the literary field. Despite this, however, he ranks very high indeed as an author and writer.

Summing Up

A MAN OF STRONG determination and pure heart, Maulana Azad was handsome and majestic in appearance and balanced and dignified in expression. His high and noble aspirations, mature wisdom and brilliant oratory put the stamp of truth and integrity over politics and captivated the hearts of millions. As a writer he breathed a new life into the pages of journalism and history. He was a man of vision, the like of whom is not seen often. It is an index of his vast bearing that when Hali and Shibli met Azad when he was 16 years old, they took him only to be the son of the famous man.

Like Azad, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan had also opposed the orthodox mullahs and endeavoured to promote a progressive outlook among the Muslims. To that extent, Azad was duly impressed by Sir Syed. But Sir Syed had felt that it was opportune for the Muslims of his time to acquiesce in the British rule. Abu'l Kalam Azad rejected this thesis. Although he was born in a family which had a long tradition of learning and scholarship, he accepted that learning and scholarship with due caution. He removed the dress of orthodoxy from learning. In short, he was a progressive person by any definition.

In an article entitled 'The Mischief of the Graves', he writes:

“When Islam came to Arabia, the world was lost in heresy and idolatry. One of the deadliest forms of heresy was that people had started worshipping the holy and saintly persons and their relics out of a misguided love and regard for them.”

Azad's father, Maulana Khairuddin, who is buried in Calcutta, had thousands of devotees who considered him as their spiritual guide. When his first death anniversary was observed, the devotees insisted that Azad should wear the mantle of the spiritual guide and organise the Urs of his father on a regular basis. Azad strongly condemned this move and declared that if any Urs was held it would be against his wishes and he would not take any part in it. Abdur Razzak Malihabadi mentions that as long as he stayed in Calcutta, Azad took care never to visit his father's tomb lest it might be misinterpreted and he might get involved in the business of spiritual guidance.

Azad tried his level best for the uplift of the Muslims. He told them in unambiguous terms that the freedom of India was linked with the freedom of the Muslims throughout the world. He was influenced by revolutionaries like Jamaluddin Afghani and Mohammad Abdu and in the beginning of his career, he was also associated with the Indian revolutionaries. But as soon as he met Mahatma Gandhi, in 1920, he had the foresight to realise that there was no leader better suited to lead India than Gandhiji. Thus he became Gandhiji's companion and remained so throughout his life. He was not like others who accompanied Mahatma Gandhi for some distance and then took to their own ways, some just vanishing, some getting bogged down in communal politics and others being swept away in some other direction. Azad was steadfast in his loyalties and withstood all pulls and pressures like a rock.

Perhaps Azad's most prominent talent was his ability to effect rapproachment between conflicting and contradictory views. It was because of this gift that he was elected President of the Indian National Congress at the age of 35 years. In this capacity he successfully reconciled opposing groups and political claims. His critical faculty and capacity to judge and weigh and his scientific temper proved that though in appearance he was like a Maulana, in fact, he was possessed of one of the most modern minds. That is why his commentary on

the Quran, *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* is the most famous commentary of this age, for it explains that Islam is a beneficial way of life for the whole of humanity. Azad has controverted the very basis of religious differences. He has also proved that the classic commentary of Imam Razi had missed the basic issues because he was guided by Greek influences.

Despite the talent, Azad started increasingly to keep to himself in the later part of his life. No doubt he must have enjoyed the company of his own choice ideas in these hours of solitude. It is, however, a fact that he developed a love for the silence that speaks volumes, the silence that is not easily decipherable, the silence that enabled him to dive deep into the recesses of his heart and come up with the power to bear frustrations and disappointments of this fickle world, not because he was a cynic or a pessimist, but because he was basically an optimist and a rationalist who bowed only before God's will. This, in a nutshell, was his religion.

When, however, he was in congenial company, he liked to talk and he was a most engaging conversationalist. Whether it was a meeting of the Congress Working Committee or a get-together at the dining table, it was mostly Azad who spoke and the range and scope of his conversation was limitless. On whatever subject he talked, history or geography, philosophy or linguistics, or even trivial topics like dress or cuisine, his knowledge of the subject seemed to be boundless. He had also a lively sense of humour and enjoyed teasing his friends, occasionally.

Professor Dr. Nafisi of Tehran University found Azad a profound and rare scholar. When Nafisi first came to India, he had a one-hour interview with Azad but even within that brief period Azad impressed him as a comprehensive scholar of Arabic and Persian and one who possessed a prodigious memory, for he could not only quote from a large number of authors and poets but could also give a complete list of their works. This impression of Nafisi was confirmed when Azad visited him in Tehran while returning from a European tour. According to Nafisi, the more

he saw of Azad, the more convinced he was of his stature as a scholar, a human being and as a lover of learning.

There have been scholars and learned persons, also persons who have spent their lives with grace and dignity. But Azad was unique. In him knowledge was combined with action and he faced life with a dignity and grace that remained unshaken under the stress of grief or sorrow, or that of joy or happiness.

Azad was also a versatile person. He was not only well-versed in poetry, music and art but also a keen swimmer. He not only enjoyed poetry but also shared his enjoyment with others by quoting verses profusely and most aptly whenever he wrote or spoke.

Among musical instruments, Azad loved the sitar and learnt to play it from Masita Khan. He was also a connoisseur of classical painting. Abdur Razzak Malihabadi writes that when some old paintings were reproduced in *Thaqafat-ul-Hind*, Azad himself wrote the annotated captions for them. A couple of his notes are reproduced below:

“*Babar's Smile*—This picture is part of a large group, painted by Mirza Abdus Samad, of the Sweet Brush, who was brought from Iran by Humayun. Kept in the British Museum collection, it is one of the masterpieces of the painter who is counted among the original preceptors of Mughal Art in India. The painting is on cloth. It shows all the Mughal Emperors from Timur to Akbar. Babar is saying something to Humayun with a slight smile on his lips. The smile is depicted most naturally and it proves the perfection of the painter's brush. All the experts of the 19th century are unanimous about the excellence of this painting. (*Thaqafat-ul Hind*, June, 1971—p. 117).

“*Emperor Jahagir*— This is a marvelous specimen of the Mughal School of Art. Jahangir is shown embarking on a journey, with Akbar's tomb in the background. Jahangir is

already mounted. He is surrounded by his nobles and courtiers and a company of troops is lined behind him. A bare-headed youth is standing behind him seems to be presenting the youth as a culprit. All the characters shown in the painting are true to life. Akbar's tomb is located in Sikandra, a few miles away from Agra. Hence, obviously, the painting depicts an occasion when Jahangir visited Akbar's tomb. Jahangir's *tuzuk* (memoirs) mentions only two visits to his father's tomb during which he does not describe any criminal being brought before him. On the first visit, out of sheer love and regard for his father, Jahangir walked all the way from Agra to Sikandra. The next time he went to Sikandra it was in order to inspect the tomb building and no other incident took place.

“During the last 80 years, this painting had been reproduced in various books and albums and no editor or compiler was able to provide any satisfactory explanation of the incident. However, Azad has been able to solve the riddle. In an article, he writes that the difficulty in interpretation arose because of the presumption that the painting was primarily connected with a visit to Akbar's tomb. As both his visits to the tomb were accounted for, this painting remained a mystery. Actually the painting describes an episode relating to the first year of Jahangir's reign when his son Khusro fled from Agra towards Punjab in order to lead a revolt against his father and Jahangir himself pursued him. Jahangir writes in his *Tuzuk*:

‘On the evening of Sunday, the 7th Zil Hijja, Khusro left the fort with about 350 soldiers whom he had succeeded in subverting. First I sent Sheikh Farid Bakhshi Begi in pursuit. The next morning, however, trusting in divine providence, I too left without any special preparation. When I marched to Iskandra (Sikandra) I thought I should pray to the spirit of my father for support. So I visited his tomb. Meanwhile, some people captured Mirza Hasan, son of Mirza Shahrukh, in the village of Sikandra, brought him before me and reported that he had decided to support Khusro and was about to leave to join him.

When those people came to know of it, they detained the youth. When I interrogated Mirza Hasan, he dare not put up any denial. Thereupon I ordered that his hands should be tied and he should be mounted over an elephant.'

"This entry fully explains the background of the painting which depicts the occasion when Jahangir was on his horse after his visit to Akbar's tomb and Mirza Hasan was being interrogated."

This is but one of the innumerable instances of Maulana Azad's depth and range of scholarship. He not only provided solutions for many literary mysteries but also helped out many authors and writers. His letters to Ghulam Rasul Mehr, one of the authorities on Ghalib, reveals that when Mehr had completed his research on Ghalib, he showed it to Maulana Azad for possible corrections. On another occasion, when Mehr wrote to Maulana Azad about his intention to write on Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan, Azad promptly sent him a detailed bibliography, including a number of French and English books and memories. Even later on, whenever he came to know any other source on this subject, he conveyed it to Mehr. Maulana Azad's letters have provided many a clue about Ghalib's life, his family, his stay in Calcutta and various other historical events.

While writing on these academic subjects, Azad was conscious of how fate had changed his vocation. When Josh Malihabadi, the poet, became a government servant, he commented, "What a surprise, that the tavern has been transformed into an office!" Maulana Azad could say something similar about the political maze in which he sank deeper and deeper. In a letter to Ghulam Rasul Mehr, he comments:

"Alas, the times could not make proper use of my mental abilities. Ghalib too used to complain that his circumstances were not favourable for the exercise of his poetic talent. But the talents which I shall take to my grave were more than one. As the Persian poet says:

*‘The commodity of loyalty
Is found rarely in the world,
The market picked up for a short while
When I was there,
Then luck ran out and I returned.’*

“Sometimes when I think of it, a sense of depression and frustration overtakes me. Whether it be religion or learning, arts or literature, essay or poetry, there is hardly any field in which the generous Providence had not revealed many new avenues to me and favoured me with ever new munificencies at every turn, to the extent that every day I find myself at a new stage in the world of meaning, compared to which the achievements of each last stage pale into insignificance...

“But alas, the Hand that Bestowed the riches of mind and heart so generously upon me, preferred not to provide me with the opportunity or the wherewithal to exercise them. The tragedy of my life is that I do not belong to the time and the age to which I was allotted.”

Naqsh-e-Azad, the collection of Azad’s letters from which the above extract has been taken, covers an amazing variety of subjects. When Azad writes about painting he mentions copyright, calligraphy, the beauty and strength of a binding, the quality and the size of paper and hundreds of other details. He was also very particular as to whom the complimentary copies of a book should be sent and in what manner.

His love for institute of learning is evident from the letter he wrote to Syed Sulaiman Nadvi on the establishment of Shibli Academi or *Darul Musannefin* at Azamgarh. “I have received the prospectus of *Darul Musannefin*. I accept whatever post you might assign to me in it. What to say of being an Honorary Fellow—a great honour indeed—I would gladly agree to serve even as a coolie in such an institution.”

His regard for his elders was no less profound and sincere. He used to send *Al-Hilal* regularly to Maulana Hali who being

another man of principle used to return the copies because due to old age and weak eyesight he was no longer able to write for it. Azad wrote to him:

“The office has informed me that copies of *Al-Hilal* which are submitted for your perusal are returned to us unopened. While my extreme regard for you is satisfied even with the signal honour that these copies went to your doorstep and came back unopened, my heart is restless to now the reason why these copies are so unwelcome! I had pleaded in the very beginning that these papers may not be deprived of the privilege of being admitted into your august house, even if to find a place in the waste paper basket.”

The same spirit of humility and generous acknowledgement of others' merit is present in his tribute to Hasrat Mohani. In a letter to Begum Hasrat, he writes:

“All praise to God that by His Kindness and Munificence He enabled Hasrat to follow in the footsteps of the Prophet Joseph. He has no peer in this honour. What Hasrat is doing today will be appreciated fully by India only fifty years hence.”

His good taste and regard for particulars is revealed in a letter to Abdur Razzak Malihabadi:

“Will you do something for me? Hakimji (Hakim Ajmal Khan) requires some Lucknow melons. Please consult some knowledgeable person, and send 40 seers of melons, packed carefully, through railway parcel. The railway receipt should be sent to the Post Master of Kathgodam with the instruction that the parcel should be sent to Hakim Ajmal Khan. The fruit must be packed well. The Lucknow fruit-sellers know this art, but you should remind them to take particular care. Some of them specialise in dispatching fruit to outside destinations. Please get hold of such a person. Price is no consideration, but the fruit must be of the best quality.”

In another letter, he writes:

“May I give you some trouble. Please do me a favour by getting hold of some competent person in Lucknow to have a *Razai* (quilt) prepared and dispatched to Calcutta. *Razais* worth their name are available only in Lucknow. The *workmen* of other places are not dexterous enough to lay a thin and even layer of cotton. The cover should be sophisticated in colour and design and the cloth of good quality. The lining should be of sandal colour, not red, and the border of blue silk. Someone who is dear to me has made a request and I want to present it to him. It does not matter even if the *razai* costs twenty to twenty five rupees, or even more, but it must be of good quality and pleasing to the eyes. The cotton should be of the usual quantity. Please be quick about it.”

These letter reveal quite a few character traits: high regard for friends, understanding of the intricacies of a profession, command over details, and generosity of nature and large-heartedness which was evident even in his political life.

Once Abdur Razzak Malihabadi was abused by a paper-hawker but he kept quiet. When Azad heard about this incident, he began to tease him and said, “Maulvi Saheb, you are no Pathan. Perhaps you are a Sheikh. How could a Pathan of Malihabad keep quiet after being abused?” Abdur Razzak retorted: “It was no abuse, just a compliment to your paper.” Azad was pleased with this retort and complimented Abdur Razzak on his self-control.

Azad himself displayed this self-control and forbearance throughout his life. People called him names and heaped abuses on him. But he never stooped down to a reply, for like the poet Naziri he believed:

*‘The begging bowl of the Fakir
Is no less full, because of
The barking of the dogs.’*

Indeed Azad was as detached and uninvolved as a Fakir. He dressed well, ate good food, knew how to live with taste; but he never bothered to run after wealth. If money had been his aim

he would have easily acquired considerable wealth by following the profession of his forefathers. But he disdained to do so.

It will be more appropriate to say that Azad was like a Vazier in wisdom and resourcefulness, but he lived like a *Fakir*. He never built up any estate or property, nor left anything for his successors.

In the words of the poet Mir:

*'As long as he lived,
He was happy,
Like a wandering minstrel, or a Calendar,'*

When *Al-Hilal* was issued, the ruler of a Princely State sent a cheque to Maulana Azad and wrote that he would send a similar cheque each month for at least a year, and even afterwards, if the paper did not become self-sufficient by then. Azad was a man of self-respect who was not easily impressed by money. Returning the cheque with thanks, he wrote:

“The Mission that I have undertaken is not dependent upon monetary backing or public appreciation or the generosity or charity of the affluent members of the nation. I depend only upon the Bounty and the Grace of the One Who if He listens to the pleadings of the beggars at His doorsteps, makes him completely independent of all other doorsteps. I have not come in this market to gain anything but to give away and to lose. I crave not praise or reward, but scorn and abuses. I seek not the flowers of pleasure, but the prick of the thorns of unrest. I want to offer in sacrifice not gold or silver of this world, but my own head. How can it give you any satisfaction to help such a person?”

In conclusion, he said:

“Moreover, I do not know what is the motive behind this donation. If you want to buy my person, the sum is too much, for I consider it less valuable than even a bundle of hay. If, however, you want to purchase my freedom of opinion or conscience, let me submit with due respect that what to say of these worthless pieces of gold, even if the Kohinoor or the

Peacock Throne were added to your entire estate, they would not impress me. For, believe me, none except the True Emperor can buy that commodity and He has already bought it.”

This detachment and calm acceptance of poverty with dignity was characteristic of the man. Indeed, one who had made it the mission of his life to dispel gloom and ignorance could never permit his own person to be swallowed up in that gloom. There must be many more instances which are not known because he spoke so rarely about personal matters, for he never believed in publicizing his good deeds. On the other hand, he considered self-publicity a sign of weakness, and avoided it like a curse.

Maulana Ghulam Rasul Mehr was one of the ardent admirers of Azad and he remained close to him throughout his life. With the partition of the country, Mehr was left in Pakistan while Azad remained in India, but his loyalty never diminished. About Azad’s soundness of judgment, Mehr says:

“I do not know when Azad foresaw that India was about to be free, but he wrote in the first issue of *Al-Hilal*, ‘I had dreamt about India’s freedom in the summer of 1906. The dream started assuming reality in 1912.’ This implies that the programme Azad had charted out at the age of 18, was launched when he was 24. Thirty-five years elapsed from that day till the achievement of independence. Hundreds of people changed their beliefs and affiliations. But Azad stood like a rock by what he had decided in 1912. He had attained what people covet most, that is, popularity at a very early age. But when the movement of truth arrived, he was willing to give up this popularity rather than forsake his ideals. There are few examples in the world history of people sacrificing popular goodwill for the sake of their principles.”

Though, not rich, Azad had richness of life; he loved his friends and relatives, helped and appreciated artists and men of letters and was a true gentleman. He had the gift of detachment and non-involvement despite the fact that he had few to compare with in the realm of thought and action and

was blessed not only with intellect but also with insight. He was a true representative of the Indian culture. Though the idea of a composite culture is not new, Azad led the way in bringing about its widespread resurgence and acceptance. The message was there in the ruins of Fatehpur Sikri, in the Dargah of Sheikh Salim Chishti, in the edifices of the Kutb Shahi Dynasty, in the Rang Mahal of Rajasthan, and in the mosques of Gujarat which illustrate neither the pure Muslim nor the pure Hindu architecture, but a fascinating synthesis of both styles. In the realm of painting, the similarities between the Indo-Persian and the Rajput styles can hardly be revised. It was not only through art and architecture that a two-way traffic was established; the Sufis and the Bhakta saints also brought the people of the two faiths close to each other. They preached that the central theme of every religion was love. When, however, the British rule intervened, people tended to ignore that message, for seeds of dissension and antagonism were sown among them. But Azad again raised the slogan of one nation and one culture. He taught us, through the *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, that the basic truths are common to all religions. He proclaimed that he was proud of being an Indian, of being a part of an indivisible nationhood. In *Qaul-e-Faisal* he said:

“Centuries of mutually shared history have enriched all aspects of our Indian way of life. Our language, our poetry, our literature, our social life, our taste, our dress, our customs and ceremonies and innumerable small things that comprise our daily life have been deeply influenced by this common way of life. Our languages were different, but we began to speak with one tongue. Our customs and rituals were different, but they coalesced with each other and evolved something common. Our old dresses may be seen in the pages of history, for they are now no longer upon our bodies. It is our joint nationality that has bestowed this commonly shared treasure upon us. And, we do not want to give it up in order to revert to the bygone days.

Of course, there are some Hindu minds amongst us who think in terms of reviving the Hindu way of life of a thousand years ago. They are suffering from a delusion which will never be realised. Indeed, there are Muslims among us who think in terms of reviving their old culture, that they brought from Western Asia a thousand years ago. But they, too, should give up their dream, for this is an unnatural thought which should never be entertained in a world of reality.”

Azad has left an indelible imprint on Indian philosophy. A most affable and charming man, he had the rare gift of inspiring genuine regard and admiration from every one who came in contact with him. He was sedate, but never aloof for he seemed to be eager to see the “good point” in others. This always made him a sympathetic listener despite being a forceful advocate and a persuasive orator. Indeed, such a one who embodied so many qualities is hard to come by. When he breathed his last, on February 22, 1958 the country, and indeed the world, was made poorer.

Appendix 1

*Speech at the inauguration of Madrasa
Islamia, Calcutta, 12 December, 1920*

(As Mahatma Gandhi was present on this occasion, Maulana Azad addressed his speech to him)

Mahatmaji,

You have witnessed the fervor of non-cooperation at various places in India. You have seen students boycotting their studies at many educational institutions. You are also aware of the sad spectacle of many people breaking their oaths. I shall not mention those regrettable instances that took place at Jhansi and Aligarh. I feel I must bring to your notice the present gathering of students whose eyes are glued to your face. This is a body of young men which has remained steadfast to the oath it undertook in the very beginning. They are a group that has preferred the afterworld to this world. They have renounced the grand buildings of the Madrasa Aalia and its imposing well-decorated hostel provided with all possible means of comfort, because they are obedient to the divine injunction, and as they are true and honest sons of India. They left that place without bothering as to where they are going or how they would live. Those people have suffered in all manners for the sake of non-cooperation. They have spent the long chill nights of winter on bare cold floors and are still living like that for they cannot afford to buy string cots.

It must be mentioned that though this Madrasa is being instituted today, in connection with the non-cooperation movement, I have been thinking about it for a long time. I have

long desired to liberate the Arabic education in Bengal from the bondage of the Government. Accordingly, I have held repeated discussions with the trustees till it culminated in the reinstitution of the Madrasa on the first of Rabiul Awwal. I have used this word intentionally, for the Madrasa was originally established when the Jama Masjid was built. In its new phase, however, I have upgraded it from an elementary *Maktab* to an institute of higher education.

I would like to draw your attention to a special distinction that graces this group. Among the many damages that the governmental system of education in India has caused to our national character and ways of life, perhaps the biggest damage has been that the real purpose of acquiring education was hidden from us. Learning is a sacred trust bestowed upon us by God and we should seek it for its own sake. But the official universities tell us another tale. They want to attract us to learning because we won't get government jobs without it. Consequently, at present, learning is not acquired in India for its own sake but for the sake of livelihood. Those huge educational buildings, those colonies of English education, are filled not with lovers of learning or seekers of truth but with those who worship a handful of wheat and a cup of rice, those who have been assured that without acquiring this education they cannot earn their bread.

But I would like to bring to your notice that within the gloom created by this degradation and insult of learning, there has always been a ray of light lit by the real and honest seekers of learning who have been studying the old religious books, the old languages and lores in the Arabic Madrasas. Believe me, it is the only group today that can be described as truly devoted to learning. For these people fully realise that to earn their livelihood they should have the English education. They know that jobs will be open to them and high posts will become available to them only through English degrees, that English education is a must for a low-paid clerk as for the highest post. They know fully

well that there is no market for Arabic education, that they cannot earn their bread through it. Despite all this, there is a mysterious and powerful urge in their hearts which deters them from turning to English education, with the result that in spite of all adverse circumstances they devote their life to the Arabic learning. This urge springs up from a true love of learning and a sincere desire to please God. It has no worldly ends. And thus we observe throughout the country that if there is any group that seeks learning for its own sake, it is these students of Arabic Madrasas. The boys of Aligarh University were not willing to boycott their classes. They were reassured by me after hours of discussions, that they would be able to earn their living even after leaving their classes. Some of them wanted me to guarantee this. On the other hand, not one of these Arabic students questioned me. As soon as the divine laws were quoted to them, they bowed their heads in obedience and were immediately willing to forsake all.

I have pointed this out to you because only a jeweler can appreciate the true worth of a jewel and I know fully well that you are a connoisseur of sincerity and sacrifice.

Appendix 2

*Speech delivered at Khilafat
Conference, Agra, 25 October, 1921*

The whole of India constituted the first arena for the Khilafat Movement which not only the Indian Muslims but all the races settled in India joined. In the first phase, the movement just dragged along; thousands of helpless people shouted slogans in favour of the Khilafat but they had no agreed programme of action before them, and no purpose except to hold meetings. Now the initial phase of the movement, when its strength was confined to strong feelings in the peoples' heart, is over. But we must thank God the Almighty for His blessings that He opened the floodgates of His Grace upon us and despite our lack of action, and even though we did not deserve it, crowned us with success. Accordingly, we were victorious within a few months. The eyes of the world were opened and people realised that the Khilafat Movement was a national cause and not something espoused by a handful of persons only.

It was essential for the success of this movement that it should not remain confined to the 70 million Muslims but should embrace all the 320 million Indians. It was essential that our Hindu brethren should also stand shoulder to shoulder with us and extend their full sympathy to the movement. For every man of faith—and each one of us is blessed with faith—should believe that the success of any cause in this world depends not on the number of persons advocating it, but on the strength of the faith and the force of conviction and action behind it.

I have proclaimed repeatedly earlier and I reiterate today that there is no need to ask any brother Indian throughout the country to take the trouble of helping us in order to make this movement successful. The only way the Muslims can succeed is by trusting God, by relying on His help and by having full confidence in his own faith. But the point is that we could not solve the Indian problem without having a popular national movement which we found in the shape of the Khilafat Movement. In fact one of the advantages in the success of the Khilafat Movement is that it revives the Indian population with tremendous force and agitation the like of which had never been experienced in India earlier.”

Appendix 3

Qaul-e-Faisal—Court Statement

(During February 1922, Maulana Azad made a statement as a satyagrahi in the Calcutta court. This rousing statement was highly praised by Mahatma Gandhi in his '*Young India*' of February 23, 1922. We reproduce below some extracts from the historic statement which is known as Qaul-e-Faisal or the Final Verdict.)

Certainly I said that the present government is a tyrant. What else could I say? I do not know why they expect that I should not call a spade a spade. I refuse to call black as white. The least that I can say and the softest adjective that I can use for this government is to call it tyrannical. There is no softer word to express this truth.

I would certainly reiterate that in the course of our duty we perceive only two alternatives, either the government should give up injustice and denial of our rights, or it must be destroyed. I am not aware of any third alternative. This is as old a truth and as old a tenet of human faith as the seas and the mountains. Whatever is evil must either be mended or ended. There is no third possibility. If I am convinced that this government is evil, I cannot pray for its long life, till it mends itself.

Shall I tell you why millions of my countrymen and I feel like this? The reasons and the logic behind it are so evident that we might say, in the words of Milton, that next to the sun, it is the most obvious and commonly perceived phenomena in the universe, in as much as sensory perceptions are irrefutable. But I shall go further and say I believe in the government's tyranny because I am an Indian, because I am a Muslim and because I am a human being.

I firmly believe that liberty is the birth right of every nation and each individual and that no man or man-made bureaucracy has the right to keep God's creatures in bondage. Whatever attractive things maybe done for those in bondage, slavery is after all slavery, something contrary to the will of God and against His Divine Laws.

Consequently, I refuse to acknowledge the present government as the rightful one and deem it my national, my religious and my human duty to liberate my country and my people from its servitude.

The well-known deception of reforms or progressive extension of self-rule cannot mislead me from this clear-cut and definite belief of mine. Freedom is the birth-right of man and none has the right to curtail it or to grant it in bits and pieces. To say that some nation should be given its freedom progressively is like saying that an owner should be given his property piecemeal or a lender should be repaid his loan in installments. I believe that if a loan is not realised from a creditor in one full payment, it will, at best, be a compromise born of compulsion which does not repeal the right of the lender to realise his dues in one full payment.

In short, my views on this issue are quite clear and unambiguous. The present government is an unrightful bureaucracy. It is but a negation of the wishes and the will of millions of people. It always places its prestige above justice and truth. It justifies the barbarous general massacre of Jallianwalla Bagh, Amritsar. It does not consider it unjust that people should be made to crawl upon their bellies like beasts, nor does it mind if innocent boys are flogged mercilessly till they fall down unconscious for refusing to salute mechanically the Union Jack. The present government does not desist from riding rough-shod over the Islamic Caliphate despite persistent pleadings of 300 million human beings. It does not consider it unbecoming to break all its pledges. It commits the patent injustice of handing over Smyrna and Thrace to the Greeks and sits back to enjoy the spectacle of the slaughter

of the total Muslim population of these two cities. It shows boundless courage in trampling over justice and infinite audacity in controverting truth. Muslims constitute 70% of Smyrna's population but the Prime Minister shamelessly calls it a Christian population. The Greek government puts all the Muslims to sword and fire but, without the slightest hesitation, the Prime Minister concocts and relates tales of Turkish atrocities while the report of an American Mission sent by England herself, is suppressed.

Finally, instead of confessing these crimes and tyrannies, or atoning for them, every type of violence and repression was let loose during the last year, from the first of November to date, to suppress the just and peaceful struggle in the country. Should I call this government 'just and righteous' instead of 'tyrannical and unrighteous'? Does the oppressor, because he is possessed of power and has jails at his disposal, become entitled to some other epithet? In the words of the good old freedom fighter Joseph Mazzini of Italy, I would say:

"We shall not deny your guilt just because you have some transient power in your hands."

In my address I had also explained the Islamic Law under which it becomes the religious duty of every Muslim to dissociate himself from the government under the present circumstances and to stop assisting it in any manner. It is this spirit which developed into the Non-Cooperation Movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The Conference also referred to the Islamic Laws under which it was sacrilegious for a Muslim to serve in the army as the Government was at war with the Islamic Caliphate and with Islamic countries. The Karachi case was filed against me because of this resolution. I have repeatedly announced in public that the resolution was drafted by me and that it was passed thrice under my presidentship at meetings held in Calcutta, Bareilly and Lahore. Accordingly, I have the first right to be prosecuted, if this be a

crime. I have also issued my presidential address in book form, with some additions, and the book has already seen many editions, along with its English translation. Thus even documentary evidence is available of my offence.

During the last two years I have toured throughout the country repeatedly, alone and some time with Mahatma Gandhi. There is no city where I have not spoken more than once on the Khilafat, the Punjab affairs, the Swaraj and the Non-Cooperation Movement and where I have not reiterated all the statements included in the two speeches filed against me.

In December 1920, the All India Khilafat Conference was held along with the session of the Indian National Congress. In 1921, the session of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema was held at Bareilly. During October last, the Provincial Khilafat Conference was held at Agra. In November the All India Ulema Conference met in Lahore. I happened to preside over all these meetings. At each place, whatever was said by the various speakers and whatever was spoken by the President, it contained the same material as is found in the above-mentioned two speeches. In fact, I must admit that the previous speeches were even more definite, clear and categorical.

If these two speeches of mine call for an indictment under Section 124-A, I fail to understand why only the speeches delivered on the 1st and 15th July were selected for this honour, because I have committed the so called crime so many times that I have lost count of it. I shall be compelled to say that during the last two years I have done nothing which does not fall under Section 124-A.

Well, the future will sit in judgment on whatever is happening today. Justice will prevail and justice will be annihilated. We have implicit faith in the verdict of the future.

It is, however, natural that having seen the clouds one should wait for the rains. Today the weather indicates all the

symptoms that denote a change of seasons. We pity those who have eyes and yet cannot see the portents.

In the speeches which have been filed against me I had declared that the seed of freedom can never be nurtured until it is watered by violence and repression.

And the Government has started watering it.

Appendix 4

*Presidential address at the fifty-third session of the
Indian National Congress, Ramgarh, March, 1940*

Friends,

In 1923 you elected me President of this national assembly. For the second time, after seventeen years, you have once again conferred upon me the same honour. Seventeen years is not a long period in the history of national struggles. But now the pace of events and world change is so rapid that our old standards no longer apply. During these last seventeen years we have passed through many stages, one after another. We had a long journey before us and it was inevitable that we should pass through several stages. We rested at many a point no doubt, but never stopped. We surveyed and examined every prospect but we were not ensnared by it and passed on. We faced many ups and downs but always our faces were turned towards the goal. The world may have doubted our intentions and determination but we never had a moment's doubt. Our path was full of difficulties and at every step we were faced with great obstacles. It may be that we did not proceed as rapidly as we desired but we did not flinch from marching forward. If we look back upon the period between 1923 and 1940, nineteen-twenty-three will appear to us a faded landmark in the distance. In 1923 we desired to reach our goal but the goal was so distant then that even the milestones were hidden from our eyes. Raise your eyes today and look ahead. Not only do you see the milestones clearly but the goal itself is not distant. But this is evident that the nearer we get to the goal the more intense does our struggle become. Although the rapid march of events has taken us farther from our old

landmark and brought us nearer our goal, yet it has created new troubles and difficulties for us. Today our caravan is passing a very critical stage. The essential difficulty of such a critical period lies in its conflicting possibilities. It is very probable that a correct step may bring us very near our goal, and on the other hand, a false step may land us in fresh troubles and difficulties.

At such a critical juncture you have elected me President and thus demonstrated the great confidence you have in one of your co-workers. It is a great honour and a great responsibility. I am grateful for the honour and crave your support in shouldering the responsibility. I am confident that the fullness of your confidence in me will be measure of the fullness of the support that I shall continue to receive.

I think that I should now come straight to the real problem before us without further delay.

The first and the most important question before us is: Whither is the step taken by us in consequence of the Declaration of War on the 3rd September, 1939, leading us? And where do we stand now?

Probably in the history of the Congress, the 1936 session at Lucknow marked a new ideological phase, when the Congress passed a long resolution on the international situation and placed its viewpoint clearly and categorically before the public. After this a consideration of the international situation, and a resolution thereon, became an essential and integral part of the annual declarations of the Congress. Thus this decision on this subject was arrived at and placed before the world with full deliberation. These resolutions embodied at one and the same time, two declarations to the world; firstly, we stated, what I have described as a new ideology in Indian politics, that we could not remain in isolation from the political events of the outside world, even in our present state of helplessness. It was essential that while we forged our way ahead and fashioned our future, we must not confine ourselves merely to our own surroundings but should keep a vigilant watch on the conditions

of the outside world. Innumerable changes in the world have brought countries and nations nearer to one another; so that the waves of thought and action, rising in one corner of the world, flow and produce immediate reactions in other places. It is therefore impossible today for India to consider her problems, while confining herself within her own four walls. It is inevitable that events in the outside world should have their repercussions in India; it is equally inevitable that our decisions and the conditions prevailing in India should affect the rest of the world. It was this consciousness and belief which brought about our decisions. We declared these resolutions against reactionary movements like Fascism and Nazism which were directed against democracy and individual and national freedom. These movements were gaining strength day by day and India regarded this as the greatest danger to world progress and peace. India's head and heart were with those people who were standing up for democracy and freedom and resisting this wave of reaction.

But while we were considering the dangers arising from Fascism and Nazism, it was impossible for us to forget the older danger which has been proved to be infinitely more fatal to the peace and freedom of nations than these new dangers, and which has in fact supplied the basis for this reaction. I refer to British imperialism. We are not distant spectators of this imperialism, as we are of the new reactionary movements. It has taken possession of our house and dominates over us. It was for this reason that we stated in clear terms that if new entanglements in Europe brought about war, India, which has been debarred from exercising her will and making free decisions, will not take any part in it. She could only consider this question when she had acquired the right of coming to decisions according to her own free will and choice.

India cannot endure the prospect of Nazism and Fascism, but she is even more tired of British imperialism. If India remains deprived of her natural right to freedom, this would clearly mean that British imperialism continued to flourish with all its traditional

characteristics, and under such conditions, India would on no account be prepared to lend a helping hand for the triumph of British imperialism. This was the second declaration which was constantly emphasized through these resolutions. These resolutions were repeatedly passed from the Lucknow session onwards till August 1939 and are known by the name of "War Resolutions."

All these declarations of the Congress were before the British Government when suddenly, in the third week of August, 1939, the war clouds gathered and thundered and, at the beginning of September, war began.

At this stage I will ask you to pause for a moment and look back. What were the conditions prevailing in August last?

The Government of India Act of 1935 was imposed upon India forcibly by the British Government and, as usual, resorting to the old stratagem, it tried to make the world believe that it had conferred a big instalment of India's national right upon her. The world knows the decision of the Congress to reject this act, nevertheless the Congress decided to avoid a conflict at that stage and preferred a respite. It resolved to take charge of Provincial Government on a certain definite condition. After this decision the Congress Ministries were functioning successfully in eight out of the eleven Provinces, and it was in the interest of Great Britain herself to maintain this state of affairs for as long a period as possible. There was yet another factor. So far as the War was concerned, India had clearly condemned Nazi Germany. Her sympathies were with the democratic nations, and this was a point in Britain's favour. Under such circumstances, it was natural to expect that if the British Government had changed its old imperialistic mentality in the slightest degree, it would, even though as a measure of expedience, change its old methods at this juncture and afford an opportunity to India to feel that she was breathing in a changed atmosphere. But we all know how the British Government behaved in this matter. There was not even a shadow of change discernible in its methods. Its policy was

dictated exactly in accordance with the habits of an imperialism a hundred and fifty years old. It decided its course of action and, without India being afforded in any manner and in the slightest degree an opportunity to declare freely her opinion, her participation in the War was announced. It was not even considered necessary to give those representative assemblies, imposed upon us by British diplomacy for purposes of show, an opportunity of expressing their opinion.

The whole world knows, and so do we, how all the Empire countries were given freedom of decision; the representative assemblies of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Ireland, all of them arrived at an independent decision, in regard to their participation in the War, without the least outside interference. Not only this but when Ireland decided to remain neutral, no surprise was shown nor was a single voice raised against it in Great Britain. Mr. De Valera, in the very shadow of England, refused to extend his help to Britain in the War unless the question of Ulster was settled to his satisfaction.

But what place did India occupy in this picture of the British Commonwealth? India is being told today that the generous hand of Britain will confer upon her the precious gift of Dominion Status in the near but unknown future. When the War began, a War which will probably be one of the greatest in the world, India was pushed into it suddenly without her even realising that she was entering it. This fact alone was sufficient to show us which way the wind was blowing. But there was no need for us to hurry. Other opportunities were to come and the time was not distant when we could see the fact of British imperialism even more unmasked and at closer quarters.

When in 1914 the first spark was ignited in a corner of the Balkans, England and France, raised the cry of the rights of small nations. Later, President Wilson's fourteen points came into view; their fate is well-known to the world. On that occasion the situation was different. After the last War, England and France intoxicated with victory, adopted a course of action which

neccessary resulted in a reaction. This reaction grew. It took the shape of Fascism in Italy and Nazism in Germany, and unrestrained dictatorships, based on brute force, challenged the peace and freedom of the world. When this happened, inevitably the world aligned itself in two rival camps; one supporting democracy and freedom; the other encouraging the forces of reaction. And in this way a new picture of the coming War began to take shape. Mr. Chamberlain's Government, to which the existence of Soviet Russia was much more unbearable than the existence of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany and which considered Russia to be a living challenge to British imperialism, continued to watch this situation for three years. Not only this, but by its attitude it clearly and repeatedly encouraged Fascist and Nazi ambitions. Abyssinia, Spain, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Albania disappeared as free countries, one after the other, from the map of the world. And Great Britain, by her vacillating policy, continually assisted in the destruction of their freedom. But when this course of action produced its natural and ultimate result and Nazi Germany marched ahead unchecked, the British Government found itself compelled to enter the arena of War. Had it not done so then, the power of Germany would have become an intolerable menace to British imperialism. Now the new slogans of freedom, world peace and democracy, took the place of the old cry of saving the smaller nations, and the whole world began to ring with these cries. The declaration of War on the 3rd September by Britain and France was made to the accompaniment of the resounding echoes of these slogans. The peoples of the world were bewildered and harassed by the brutal trial of strength and the world-wide unrest created by these new reactionary forces, and they lent a willing ear to the siren voices of these slogans.

War was declared on the 3rd of September and on the 7th September the All India Congress Working Committee met at Wardha to deliberate upon the situation. What did the Working Committee do on this occasion? All the declarations of the

Congress made since 1936 were before it. It had also to face the action taken by the British Government in declaring India as a belligerent country. Undoubtedly, the Congress could not have been blamed had it come to a final decision in accordance with the logic of the situation. But it continued to keep vigilant watch on its mind and heart; it resisted the natural urge of the moment for an acceleration of pace; it deliberated upon every aspect of the matter, unemotionally and dispassionately, and took the step which today entitles India to raise her head and say to the world that this was the only correct step which could have been then taken. The Congress postponed its final decisions and asked the British Government to state its War aims, for on this depended not only peace and justice for India, but for the whole world. If India was being invited to participate in this War, she had a right to know why this War was being fought. What was its object? If the result of this grim tragedy was not to be the same as that of the last War, and if it was really being fought to safeguard Freedom, Democracy and Peace and to bring a new order to the world, then, in all conscience, India had a right to know, what would be the effect of these aims on her own destiny.

The Working Committee formulated this demand in a long statement which was published on the 14th September, 1939. If I express the hope that this statement will occupy an outstanding place in recent Indian history, I am sure I am not claiming too much of the future historian. This is a simple but irrefutable document, based on truth and reason, and it can only be set aside by the arrogant pride of armed force. Though this cry was raised in India, in fact it was not of India only, but it was the agonized cry of wronged humanity, whose hopes had so often before been betrayed. Twenty-five years ago the world was plunged into one of the biggest infernos of death and destruction known to history and yet this was but a preparation for a still bigger catastrophe. The world was bewitched and its hopes were kindled by cries of freedom for small nations, collective security, self-determination, disarmament, League of Nations and international arbitration,

and of similar high sounding phrases. But what was the result in the end? Every cry proved false: every vision that seemed so real to us, vanished as a dream. Again nations are being plunged into the blood and fire of War. Should we part with reason and reality so completely as not even to ask why this is being done and how this affected our destiny before plunging into this deluge of death and destruction?

In answer to this demand of the Congress a regular series of statements were made on behalf of the British Government, both in England and in India. The first link of the series was the Delhi Declaration of the Viceroy, dated the 17th October. This lengthy statement is perhaps a finished example of that peculiarly involved and tiring style which characterises the official literature of the Government of India. After reading page after page of this statement, the curtain is at last lifted with hesitation. We have a glimpse. We are told then that if we want to know the War aims we must read a speech by the Prime Minister of Britain, and this speech deals only with the peace of Europe and with the adjustment of international relations. Even the words "Freedom" and "Democracy" are not to be found in the Viceroy's statement. So far as India is concerned, it only reaffirms the policy laid down in the Preamble to the 1919 Act, which is now embodied in the 1935 Act. Today that policy continues to be the same; there is nothing to add to it or to improve upon it.

On the 17th of October, 1939 the statement of the Viceroy was published and the Working Committee met to deliberate upon it on the 22nd October at Wardha. Without any discussion it came to the conclusion that this reply could under no circumstances be considered satisfactory, and that it should now unhesitatingly give the decision, which it had postponed till then. The decision of the Working Committee was as follows:

"In the circumstances, the Committee cannot possibly give any support to Great Britain, for it would amount to an endorsement of the imperialistic policy which the Congress has always sought to end. As a first step in this direction, the

Committee call upon the Congress Ministries to tender their resignations.”

As a result of this decision the Congress Ministries in eight Provinces resigned.

This was but the first step which the Congress took in the series of events. Now we have to see to what these events led. The communiqué of the Viceroy issued on the 5th February from Delhi giving the resume of the talk between him and Mahatma Gandhi and Mahatma Gandhi's statement of the 6th February may be regarded as the last of this series. We all know the substance of the Viceroy's statement. The British Government, it is stated, fully desired that India should in the shortest time possible under the circumstance, attain the status of a British dominion, and that the transition period should be as short as possible. But it is unwilling to concede to India the right of framing her own constitution and deciding her own destiny through her own elected representatives without outside interference. In other words, the British Government does not accept the position that India has got the right of self-determination.

At the first touch of reality the structure of made-belief fell to pieces. For the last four years the world resounded with cries of democracy and freedom. The utterances of the most responsible spokesmen of England and France in this regard are so fresh in our memory as not to need recall. But the moment India raised this question, the reality behind these utterances was unveiled. Now we are told that, without doubt, safeguarding the freedom of nations is the aim of this War but that this is confined within the geographical limits of Europe. The peoples of Asia and Africa should not dare to have any such hopes. Mr. Chamberlain has made this even more clear in his Birmingham speech of the 24th February, though we never had any doubts about the matter. He confirmed the British Government's action by his words. Proclaiming British War aims, he stated that they were fighting to secure that small nations in Europe shall hence-forth live in security, free from the constant threat of aggression against their independence.

Though this answer about War aims has been given through a British spokesman, yet in reality it interprets the real mentality of Europe as a whole, which has been known to the world for the last two hundred years. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries whatever principles were accepted for individual and collective human freedom, the right to claim them and to benefit from them was limited to European nations. And even amongst them, its application was confined to the Christian nations of Europe. Today in the middle of the twentieth century, the world has so changed that the thoughts and actions of the last century read like ancient history, and appear to us as faded landmarks in the distance. But we will have to admit that there is at least one distinctive landmark of Europe emphasizing human rights, which has not faded and is still with us. We have not passed it yet, or achieved those rights.

This reality has been brought home to us again by the problem of our own political and national rights in India. When, after the declaration of War, we raised the question of War aims and their effect on India's destiny, we were not forgetful of British policy in 1917 and 1919. We wanted to know how in the year 1939, when the world was covering the track of centuries in the course of days, England looked at India. Had that look changed? We were given a clear reply that it had not; even now there was no change in that imperialist outlook. We are told to believe that the British Government is very desirous that India should attain the status of a dominion, in the shortest possible period. We knew even before that the British Government had expressed this desire. Now we know that they are very anxious indeed.

But it is not a question of the desire or of the measure of the desire of the British Government. The straight and simple question is of India's right; whether she is entitled to determine her own fate or not. On the answer to this question depends the answer to all other questions of the day. This question forms the foundation stone of the Indian problem; India will not allow it to be removed, for if it is displaced, the whole structure of Indian nationalism will collapse.

So far as the question of War is concerned our position is quite clear, we see the face of British imperialism as clearly now as we did in the last War, and we are not prepared to assist in its triumph by participating in the War. Our case is crystal clear. We do not wish to see British imperialism triumphant and stronger and thus lengthen the period of our own subjection to it. We absolutely refuse to do so. Our way lies patently in the opposite direction.

Let us return to our starting point and consider once again whether the step that we took after the Declaration of War on the 3rd September is leading us. Where do we stand today? The answer to both these questions is by this time apparent to your minds and is hovering on your lips. It is not even necessary that your lips should tell me for I feel the quivering of your hearts. The step of temporary and partial cooperation which we took in 1937, we withdrew after the Declaration of War. Inevitably we inclined towards further steps in non-cooperation. As we stand today, we have to decide whether we should march forward in this direction or go backward. When once a step is taken, there is no stopping. To cry halt, is to go back, and we refuse to go back. We can only, therefore go forward. I am sure that the voice of every one of you joins mine when I proclaim that we must and will go forward.

In this connection one question naturally faces us. It is the verdict of history that in a struggle between nations, no power foregoes its possessions unless compelled to do so. Principles of reason and morality have affected the conduct of individuals but have not affected the selfish conduct of Powers that dominate. Today even in the middle of the twentieth century, we witness how the new reactionary forces in Europe have shattered man's faith in individual and collective human rights. In place of justice and reason brute force has become the sole argument in the determination of rights. But while the world is presenting this depressing picture, there is another side, the hopeful side, which cannot be ignored. We see countless millions all over the world,

without any distinction, awakening to a new consciousness which is spreading everywhere with great rapidity. This new consciousness is tired of the utter hopelessness of the old order, and is impatient for a new order based on reason, justice and peace. This new awakening which arose after the last War and took root in the deepest recesses of the human soul, has now come to dominate men's minds and their utterances. Perhaps there is no parallel in history to the speed of this awakening.

In these circumstances was it beyond the realm of possibility that history should, contrary to its old record, take a new step? Was it impossible that two great peoples of the world, who had been tied together by the course of events as rulers and ruled, should create a new relationship between them, based on reason, justice and peace? If that had been possible, the sorrows born of World War would have given place to a newborn hope; and the new order of reason and justice would have ushered in a new dawn. If the British people could have proudly said to the world today that they had added such a new example to history, what a vast and unparalleled triumph this would have been for humanity. Certainly this was not an impossibility, but it was an amazingly difficult thing to do.

In the prevailing darkness of the times, it is faith in the bright side of human nature which sustains the great soul of Mahatma Gandhi. He is always prepared to take advantage of every opening which might lead to a mutual settlement without feeling that he is weakening his unassailable position.

Since War began, several members of the British Cabinet have tried to make the world believe that the old order of British imperialism has ended, and that today the British nation has no other aims except those of peace and justice. Which country could have more warmly acclaimed such a declaration, British imperialism stands in the way of peace and justice today exactly as it did before the War. The Indian demand was the touch

stone for all such claims. They were so tested and found to be counterfeit and untrue.

I have briefly placed before you the real question of the day. That is the vital question for us; all else are subsidiary to it. It was in relation to that question that the Congress put forward its invitation to the British Government in September last, and made a clear and simple demand, to which no community or group could possibly object. It was not in our remotest thought that the communal question could be raised in this connection. We realize that there are some groups in the country which cannot keep step with the Congress in the political struggle or go as far as the Congress is prepared to go; we know that some do not agree with the method of direct action which the great majority of political India has adopted. But so far as the right of the Indian people to independence and the full admission of India's birthright to freedom is concerned, an awakened and impatient India has passed far beyond the early stages, and none dare oppose our demand. Even those classes who cling to their special interests and fear change lest this might affect them adversely, are tendered helpless by the spirit of the times. They have to admit and to agree to the goal we have set before us.

A time of crisis is testing time for all of us, and so the great problem of the day has tested us and exposed many an aspect of our present-day politics. It has laid bare also the reality that lies behind the communal problem. Repeated attempts were made, both in England and India, to mix up the communal question with the vital political question of the day, and thus to confuse the real issue. Again and again, it was sought to convince the world that the problem of the minorities barred the way to a proper solution of India's political problem.

For a hundred and fifty years British imperialism has pursued the policy of divide and rule, and by emphasizing internal differences, sought to use various groups for the consolidation of its own power. That was the inevitable result

of India's political subjection, and it is folly for us to complain and grow bitter. A foreign government can never encourage internal unity in the subject country, for disunity is the surest guarantee for the continuance of its own domination. But when we were told, and the world was asked to believe, that British imperialism had ended, and the long chapter of Indian history dominated by it had closed, was it unreasonable for us to expect that British statesmen would at last give up this evil inheritance and not exploit the communal situation for political ends? But the time for this is yet distant; we may not cling to such vain hopes. So the last five months with their succession of events have established. Imperialism, in spite of all assurances to the contrary, still flourishes; it has yet to be ended.

But whatever the roots of our problems might be, it is obvious that India, like other countries, has her internal problems. Of these, the communal problem is an important one. We do not and cannot expect the British Government to deny its existence. The communal problem is undoubtedly with us, and if we want to go ahead, we must need take it into account. Every step that we take by ignoring it will be wrong step. The problem is there; to admit its existence, however, does not mean that it should be used as a weapon against India's national freedom. British imperialism has always exploited it to this end. If Britain desired to end her imperialistic methods in India and close that dismal chapter of history, then the first signs of this change must naturally appear in her treatment of the communal problem.

What is the Congress position in regard to this problem? It has been the claim of the Congress, from its earliest beginnings, that it considers India as a nation and takes every step in the interest of the nation as a whole. This entitles the world to examine this claim strictly and the Congress must establish the truth of its assertion. I wish to examine afresh this question from this point of view.

There can be only three aspect of the communal problem: its existence, its importance, and the method of its solution.

The entire history of the Congress demonstrates that it has always acknowledged the existence of the problem. It has never tried to minimise its importance. In dealing with this problem, it followed a policy which was the most suitable under the circumstances. It is difficult to conceive of a different or better course of action. If however, a better course could be suggested, the Congress was always, and is today, eager to welcome it.

We could attach no greater importance to it, than to make it the first condition for the attainment of our national goal. The Congress has always held this belief; no one can challenge this fact. It has always held two basic principles in this connection and every step was taken deliberately with these in view.

(1) Whatever constitution is adopted for India, there must be the fullest guarantees in it for the rights and interests of minorities.

(2) The minorities should judge for themselves what safeguards are necessary for the protection of their rights and interests. The majority should not decide this. Therefore, the decision in this respect must depend upon the consent of the minorities and not on a majority vote.

The question of the minorities is not a special Indian problem. It has existed in other parts of the world. I venture to address the world from this platform, and to enquire whether any just and more equitable course of action can be adopted in this connection, that the one suggested above? If so, which is it? Is there anything lacking in this approach, which necessitates that the Congress be reminded of its duty? The Congress has always been ready to consider any failure in the discharge of its duty. It is so prepared today. I have been in the Congress for the last nineteen years. During the whole of this period there is not a single important decision of the Congress in the shaping of which I have not had the honour to participate. I assert that during there last nineteen years, not for a single day did the Congress think of solving this problem in any way other than the way I have stated above. This was not a mere assertion

of the Congress, but its determined and decided course of action. Many a time during the last fifteen years this policy was subjected to the severest tests, but it stood firm as a rock.

The manner in which the Congress has dealt with this problem today in connection with the Constituent Assembly, throws a flood of light on these two principles and clarifies them. The recognised minorities have a right, if they so please, to choose their representatives by their votes. Their representatives will not have to rely upon the votes of any other community except their own. So far as the question of the rights and the interests of the minorities is concerned, the decision will not depend upon the majority of the votes in the Constituent Assembly. It will be subject to the content of the minority. If unanimity is not achieved on any question, then an impartial tribunal, to which the minorities have also consented, will decide the matter. This last proviso is merely in the nature of a provision for a possible contingency, and is more unlikely to be required. If a more practical proposal is made, there can be no objection to it.

When these principles are accepted and acted upon by the Congress, what is it that obliges British statesmen to remind us so often of the problem of the minorities, and to make the world believe that this stands in the way of Indian freedom? If it is really so, why does not the British Government recognise clearly India's freedom and give us an opportunity to solve this problem for ever by mutual agreement amongst ourselves?

Dissensions were sown and encouraged amongst us, and yet we are taunted because of them. We are told to put an end to our communal conflicts, but opportunity to do so is denied to us. Such is the position deliberately created to thwart us: such are the chains that bind. But no difficulties or constraints can deter us from taking the right steps with courage and fortitude. Our path is full of obstacles but we are determined to overcome them.

We have considered the problem of the minorities of India. But are the Muslims such a minority as to have the least doubt

or fear about their future? A small minority may legitimately have fears and apprehensions, but can the Muslims allow themselves to be disturbed by them? I do not know how many of you are familiar with my writings, twenty-eight years ago, in the *Al-Hilal*. If there are any such here, I would request them to refresh their memories. Even then I gave expression to my conviction, and I repeat this today, that in the texture of Indian politics, nothing is farther removed from the truth than to say that Indian Muslims occupy the position of a political minority. It is equally absurd for them to be apprehensive about their rights and interests in a democratic India. This fundamental mistake has opened the door to countless misunderstandings. False arguments were built upon wrong premises. This error, on the one hand, brought confusion into the minds of the Musalmans about their own true position, and, on the other hand, it involved the world in misunderstandings, so that the picture of India could not be seen in right perspective.

If time had permitted, I would have told you in detail, how during the last sixty years, this artificial and untrue picture of India was made, and whose hands traced it. In effect, this was the result of the same policy of divide and rule which took particular shape in the minds of British officialdom in India after the Congress launched the national movement. The object of this was to prepare the Musalmans for use against the new political awakening. In this plan, prominence was given to two points. First: that India was inhabited by two different communities, the Hindus and the Musalmans, and for this reason no demand could be made in the name of a united nation. Second : that numerically the Musalmans were far less than the Hindus, and because of this the necessary consequence of the establishment of democratic institutions in India would be to establish the rule of the Hindu majority and to jeopardize the existence of the Muslims. I shall not go into any greater detail now. Should you, however, wish to know the early history of this matter, I would refer you to the time of Lord Dufferin, a former Viceroy of India,

and Sir Auckland Colvin, a former Lieutenant Governor of the N.W.P., now the United Provinces.

Thus were sown the seeds of disunity by British imperialism on Indian soil. The plant grew and was nurtured and spread its nettles, and even though fifty years have passed since then, the roots are still there.

Politically speaking, the word minority does not mean just a group that is numerically smaller and therefore entitled to special protection. It means a group that is so small in number and so lacking in other qualities that give strength, that it has no confidence in its own capacity to protect itself from the much larger group that surrounds it. It is not enough that the group should be relatively the smaller, but that it should be absolutely so small as to be incapable of protecting its interest. That is not merely a question of numbers; other factors also count. If a country has two major groups numbering a million and two millions respectively, it does not necessarily follow that because one is half the other, it must call itself politically a minority and consider itself weak.

If this is the right test, let us apply it to the position of the Muslims in India. You will see at a glance a vast concourse, spreading out all over the country; they stand erect, and to imagine that they exist helplessly as a 'minority' is to delude oneself.

The Muslims in India number between eighty and ninety millions. The type of social or racial divisions, which affect other communities, do not divide them. The powerful bounds of Islamic brotherhood and equality have protected them to a large extent from the weakness that flows from social divisions. It is true that they number only one-fourth of the total population; but the question is not one of population ratio, but of the large numbers and the strength behind them. Can such a vast mass of humanity have any legitimate reason for apprehension that in a free and democratic India, it might be unable to protect its rights and interests?

These numbers are not confined to any particular area but spread out unevenly over different parts of the country. In four provinces out of eleven in India there is a Muslim majority, the other religious groups being minorities. If British Baluchistan is added, there are five provinces with Muslim majorities. Even if we are compelled at present to consider this question on a basis of religious groupings, the position of the Muslims is not that of a minority only. If they are in a minority in seven provinces, they are in a majority in five. This being so, there is absolutely no reason why they should be oppressed by the feeling of being a minority.

Whatever may be the details of the future constitution of India, we know that it will be an all-India federation which is, in the fullest sense, democratic, and every unit of which will have autonomy in regard to internal affairs. The federal centre will be concerned only with all-India matters of common concern, such as, foreign relations, defence, customs, etc. Under these circumstances, can any one who has any conception of the actual working of a democratic constitution, allow himself to be led astray by this false issue of majority and minority. I cannot believe for an instant that there can be any room whatever for these misgivings in the picture of India's future. These apprehensions are arising because, in the words of a British statesman regarding Ireland, we are yet standing on the banks of the river and, though wishing to swim, are unwilling to enter the water. There is only one remedy; we should take the plunge fearlessly. No sooner is this done, than shall we realise that all our apprehensions were without foundation.

A BASIC QUESTION FOR INDIAN MUSALMANS

It is now nearly thirty years since I first attempted to examine this question as an Indian Musalman. The majority of the Muslims then were keeping completely apart from the political struggle and they were influenced by the same mentality of aloofness

and antagonism, which prevailed amongst them previously in the year 1888. This depressing atmosphere did not prevent me from giving my anxious thought to this matter, and I reached quickly a final conclusion, which influenced my belief and action. I saw India, with all her many burdens, marching ahead to her future destiny. We were fellow-passengers in this boat and we could not ignore its swift passage through the waters; and so it became necessary for us to come to a clear and final decision about our plan of action. How we were to do so? Not merely by skimming the surface of the problem but by going down to its roots, and then to consider our position. I did so and I realised that the solution of the whole problem depended on the answer to one question: Do we, Indian Musalmans, view the free India of future with suspicion and distrust or with courage and confidence? If we view it with fear and suspicion, then undoubtedly we have to follow a different path. No present declaration, no promise for the future, no constitutional safeguards, can be a remedy for our doubts and fears. We are then forced to tolerate the existence of a third power. This third power is already entrenched here and has no intention of withdrawing and, if we follow this path of fear, we must need look forward to its continuance. But if we are convinced that for us fear and doubt have no place, and that we must view the future with courage and confidence in ourselves, then our course of action becomes absolutely clear. We find ourselves in a new world, which is free from the dark shadows of doubt, vacillation, inaction and apathy and where the light of faith and determination, action and enthusiasm never fails. The confusions of the times, the ups and downs that come our way, the difficulties that beset our thorny path, cannot change the direction of our steps. It becomes our bounden duty then to march with assured steps to India's national goal.

I arrived at this definite conclusion without the least hesitation, and every fibre of my being revolted against the former alternative. I could not bear the thought of it. I could not

conceive it possible for a Musalman to tolerate this, unless he has rooted out the spirit of Islam from every corner of his being.

I started the *Al-Hilal* in 1912 and put this conclusion of mine before the Muslims of India. I need not remind you that my cries were not without effect. The period from 1912 to 1918 marked a new phase in the political awakening of the Muslims. Towards the ends of 1920, on my release after four years of internment, I found that the political ideology of the Musalmans had broken through its old mould and was taking another shape. Twenty years have gone by and much has happened since then. The tide of events has ever risen higher, and fresh waves of thought have enveloped us. But this fact still remains unchanged, that the general opinion amongst the Muslims is opposed to going back.

That is certain; they are not prepared to retrace their steps. But again they are full of doubts about their future path. I am not going into the reasons for this; I shall only try to understand the effects. I would remind my co-religionists that today I stand exactly where I stood in 1912 when I addressed them on this issue. I have given thought to all those innumerable occurrences which have happened since then; my eyes have watched them, my mind has pondered over them. These events did not merely pass me by; I was in the midst of them, a participant and I examined every circumstance with care. I cannot be false to what I have myself seen and observed; I cannot quarrel with my own convictions; I cannot stifle the voice of my conscience. I repeat today what I have said throughout this entire period, that the ninety millions of Muslims of India have no other right course of action than the one to which I invited them in 1912.

Some of my co-religionist, who paid heed to my call in 1912, are in disagreement with me today. I do not wish to find fault with them, but I would make appeal to their sincerity and sense of responsibility. We are dealing with the destinies of peoples and nations. We cannot come to right conclusions if we are swept away by the passions of the moment. We must base

our judgments on the solid realities of life. It is true that the sky is overcast today and the outlook is dark. The Muslims have to come into the light of reality. Let them examine every aspect of the matter again today, and they will find no other course of action open to them.

I am a Musalman and am proud of that fact. Islam's splendid traditions of thirteen hundred years are my inheritance. I am unwilling to lose even the smallest part of this inheritance. The teaching and history of Islam, its arts and letters and civilisation are my wealth and my fortune. It is my duty to protect them.

As a Musalman I have a special interest in Islamic religion and culture and I cannot tolerate my interference with them. But in addition to these sentiments, I have others also which the realities and conditions of my life have forced upon me. The spirit of Islam does not come in the way of these sentiments; it guides and helps me forward. I am proud of being an Indian. I am a part of the indivisible unity that is Indian nationality. I am indispensable to this noble edifice and without me this splendid structure of India is incomplete. I am an essential element which has gone to build India, I can never surrender this claim.

It was India's historic destiny that many human races and cultures and religions should flow to her, finding a home in her hospitable soil, and that many a caravan should find rest here. Even before the dawn of history, these caravans trekked into India and wave after wave of new-comers followed. This vast and fertile land gave welcome to all and took them to her bosom. One of last three caravans, following the footsteps of its predecessors, was that of the followers of Islam. This came here and settled here for good. This led to a meeting of the culture-currents of two different races. Like the Ganga and the Yamuna, they flowed for a while through separate courses, but nature's immutable law brought them together and joined them in a *sangam*. This fusion was a notable event in history. Since then, destiny, in her own hidden way, began to fashion a new India in place of the old. We

brought our treasures with us, and India too was full of the riches of her own precious heritage. We gave our wealth to her and she unlocked the doors of her own treasures to us. We gave her, what she needed most, the most precious of gifts from Islam's treasury, the message of democracy and human equality.

Full eleven centuries have passed by since then. Islam has now as great a claim on the soil of India as Hinduism. If Hinduism has been the religion of the people here for several thousands of years, Islam also has been their religion for a thousand years. Just as a Hindu can say with pride that he is an Indian and follows Hinduism, so also we can say with equal pride that we are Indians and follow Islam. I shall enlarge this orbit still further. The Indian Christian is equally entitled to say with pride that he is an Indian and is following a religion of India, namely Christianity.

Eleven hundred years of common history have enriched India with our common achievements. Our languages, our poetry, our literature, our culture, our art, our dress, our manners and customs, the innumerable happenings of our daily life, everything bears the stamp of our joint endeavour. There is indeed no aspect of our life which has escaped this stamp. Our Languages were different, but we grew to use a common language; our manners and customs were dissimilar, but they acted and reacted on each other and thus produced a new synthesis. Our old dress may be seen only in ancient pictures, of by-gone days; no one wears it today. This joint wealth is the heritage of our common nationality and we do not want to leave it and go back to the times when this joint life had not begun. If there are any Hindus amongst us who desire to bring back the Hindu life of a thousand years ago and more, they dream, and such dreams are vain fantasies. So also if there are any Muslims who wish to revive their past civilization and culture, which they brought a thousand years ago from Iran and Central Asia, they dream also and the sooner they wake up the better. These are unnatural fancies which cannot take root in the soil of reality. I am one of those who believe

that revival may be a necessity in a religion but in social matters it is a denial of progress.

These thousand years of our joint life have moulded us into a common nationality. This cannot be undone artificially. Nature does her fashioning through her hidden processes in the course of centuries. The cast has now been moulded and destiny has set her seal upon it. Whether we like it or not, we have now become an Indian nation, united and indivisible. No fantasy or artificial scheming to separate and divide can break this unity. We must accept the logic of fact and history and engage ourselves in the fashioning of our future destiny.

I shall not take any more of your time. My address must end now. But before I do so, permit me to remind you that our success depends upon three factors: unity, discipline and full confidence in Mahatma Gandhi's leadership. The glorious past record of our movement was due to his great leadership, and it is only under his leadership that we can look forward to a future of successful achievement.

The time of our trial is upon us. We have already focused the world's attention. Let us endeavour to prove ourselves worthy.

Appendix 5

On the Death of his wife

(Maulana Azad wrote the following letter on the death of his wife, Zuleikha Begum. At that time he was interned in the Ahmadnagar Fort. This letter, like others included in the collection *Ghubare Khatir*, was addressed to Nawab Sadr Yar Jung Maulana Habibur Rahman Khan Sherwani but it was never posted.)

Ahmadnagar Fort
11 April, 1943

*My heart was consumed with the
dread of parting with thee,
And then the ruthless heavens decided
That I must learn to live without thee.*

Respected Friend,

It is not the usual four o'clock in the morning. You might call it just the beginning of the early hours of the morn. As usual I had gone to bed at ten in the night but sleep refused to entertain my eyes. So I have no option but to get up, come over to this room, turn on the light and busy myself with my usual occupations. Then again I thought I would write to you for some time and relieve my feelings to some extent by conversing with you.

During the last eight months that I have spent here, this is the sixth night of restlessness. God knows how many more such nights have yet to pass. As the poet says:

*My mind dwells in the skies and my head at the feet
of the bellowed,
How can I talk, with no control over head or heart?*

My wife had been ailing for several years. In 1941, when I was in the Naini prison, I was not informed about her illness

lest it might cause me anxiety. But, after my release, I learnt that she had been sick almost throughout the period of my imprisonment. In her letters that I received in the prison she mentioned everything on earth except her illness. When I consulted the doctors, they advised a change of climate and she left for Ranchi. This apparently did her some good for when she returned in July, I could discern the glow of health over her face.

As for myself, during this while I was mostly touring. Events were happening so rapidly that I could not tarry or linger on any one point or place. No sooner did I reach one destination when another place seemed to summon me urgently:

*I must have passed hundreds of deserts
And yet one more seems to be ahead of me.*

It was the last day of July when I returned to Calcutta after a three-week tour and only four days later left again for Bombay to attend the AICC meeting. The storm had not burst as yet, though its signs and portents were quite evident. Rumours were rife about the Government's intentions. It was even said that after the AICC meeting all the members of the Working Committee would be arrested and deported out of India to some unknown place.* It was also mentioned that due to the War the Government had acquired emergency powers and it could do anything under these powers. More than myself, it was Zuleikha who used to keep track of such news and she had fully evaluated the situation. I had to look after so many things during the four days I spent at home between two trips that I had hardly time to talk to her. She knew the peculiarity of my nature, that I preferred not to talk on such occasions and I did not like to be interrupted. So, she too, kept quiet. But our silence was not

* The statements which appeared in the press after our arrest indicated that the rumour was not entirely unfounded. The Secretary of State and the Viceroy had agreed that after our arrest we should be sent to East Africa. But then the decision was changed and it was decided that we should be kept in the Ahmadnagar Fort under military custody and under such strict conditions that the object of deporting us could be achieved in India itself.

devoid of speech because we would communicate with each other without saying a word.

On the 3rd of August, when I was leaving for Bombay, she came as usual to the door to bid me good bye. I told her that if nothing unexpected happened I should return by the 13th of August. She did not say a word besides '*Khuda Hafiz*'. But nothing that she could have said would have been more expressive than the silent agonized look on her face. It was the face that cried, not the eyes.

*'With one excuse or another,
I managed to keep quiet before thee.'*

During the last 25 years I must have travelled and parted from her hundreds of times. I was also arrested many a time. And yet I had never seen her so sad. Was this display of momentary weakness because her emotions had overpowered her? At that time I had thought so but, now, when I reconsider it in the light of subsequent happenings, I have a feeling that she had a vague premonition that, that was our last meeting in life. She was not saying good-bye as I was going on a journey. She was saying good-bye because she herself was soon going on a long journey.

She knew my nature fully well. She was aware that on such occasions if she displayed any emotion it would displease me. I would not forget it easily and it would embitter our relationship for quite some time. In 1916, when I was arrested for the first time, she could not restrain her emotions and for a long time I did not forgive her. But that incident changed her completely and afterwards she did her best to keep in tune with the tenor of my life. And she did succeed to the extent that she bore all unpleasant happenings with great courage and fortitude. She not only shared my thoughts and beliefs but also became a real companion and helpmate in my active life. That's why I wondered at her lack of self-control at our final parting. Perhaps her inner consciousness could already discern the shadow of the coming events.

After arrest, we were not allowed for some time to correspond with our family and friends. When this restriction was removed, I received her first letter on 17th September. After that I began to receive her letters regularly. As I knew that she would never like to worry me by mentioning her own illness, I used to enquire about her health from other sources. As a rule it took about 10 to 12 days for a letter to reach me and hence I could not know anything quickly. On 15th February, I received a letter dated 2nd February which told me that she was not well. When I sent a wire to seek further news, I was told, a week later, that there was nothing to worry about.

On 23rd March, I received the first news of her critical illness. The news came through a telegram addressed to the Jail Superintendent from the Government of Bombay who in turn had received a wire to this effect from Calcutta. God knows when the Bombay Government received the telegram from Calcutta and when ultimately, they decided that it should be communicated to me.

As the Government had in its opinion kept our place of internment secret, it had adopted from the very beginning the practice that no telegram could be issued or received here, otherwise people could come to know of our place of internment through the telegraph office. Consequently, whatever the urgency, a telegram was of no use. For, if one wished to send a telegram, it was to be handed over to the Jail Superintendent who forwarded it by post to Bombay, where it was censored and then dispatched onwards. As for letters, there were two types of censorship for the prisoners. For some, a censor in Bombay was considered sufficient. For others, all correspondence was redirected to Delhi and it was not forwarded to us till it was cleared by the Capital. As I was in the second category, no telegram could reach me earlier than a week, nor any telegram of mine could reach Calcutta sooner.

The telegram that reached here on 23rd March was in army code and the Superintendent could not read it. He took it

to the Military Headquarters. There too no code-knowing person was available. Hence one full day passed in decoding it and I got a copy only at night.

The next day when the newspapers arrived they contained the news. It was learnt that the doctors had informed the Government about her condition and were awaiting instructions. Then they began to issue a daily medical bulletin. The Superintendent used to hear the news over the radio and mentioned it so some of his colleagues.

After I received the telegram, the Superintendent came to me the next day and told me that if I wanted to make any representation to the government in this connection he was willing to send it immediately to Bombay, disregarding the prevailing restrictions. He was quite moved at the situation and assured me of his sympathy. But I told him firmly that I wanted to make no request to the government. Then he went to Jawaharlal and discussed this with him. In the afternoon, Jawaharlal came to me and we discussed this issue for a long time. I told him the same thing as I had to the Superintendent. Later on it was learnt that the Superintendent had come to me at the instance of the Bombay Government.

As soon as the news of her critical condition came in, I began to assess my feelings. Man's self is undecipherable. We devote a lifetime in looking after it and know it no better. From the very beginning of my life I had to live in conditions which provided frequent occasions on which it was necessary to exercise self-control and, as far as I remember, I never failed in doing that:

*To the best of my ability, I tore my clothes apart,
And my woolen Fakir's robe had no cause for complaint.*

Even so, when I received the news of her illness, I felt that the equilibrium of my self was shaken and I would have to make a strong effort to restore it. This conflict exhausts not the mind but the body, which begins to melt away internally.

I would not like to conceal from you what happened to my feelings during that period. My objective was to face this

situation with equanimity. I was successful outwardly, though not so inwardly. I began to feel that the mind was playing the same game of dissimulation and pretence that we play constantly in every shade of our feelings and reactions so as not to let appearance resemble reality.

The first effort that I had to make was not to interrupt the daily routine of the prison life. Four times a day, I had to leave my room and walk across to the last room in the row, to take meals or tea. As I have become used to punctuality by the minute, this practice has continued even here and all my companions have had to observe it. I did not have to change any one of my regular habits. I sit at the dining table regularly, and although I have lost my appetite completely, I still manage to swallow a few morsels. At night, I used to sit with some friends after the meal for chatting. That too has not changed. I sit and talk with them as long as I used to do, in the same manner and on the same topics.

The newspapers arrive here between noon and 1.00 p.m. My room faces the Superintendent's office. The jailor brings the paper from there direct to my room. As soon as he got out of the office and I could hear his foot-steps, my heart used to palpitate with the apprehension that the paper may contain some dreadful news. Then I used to check myself with a jerk. My sofa is placed in such a manner that it does not face the door. Hence, until the visitor comes inside, he cannot see my face. By the time the jailor arrived, I was able to nod at him with a smile and to indicate that he might leave the paper on the table and then I used to resume writing as if I was in no particular hurry to glance at the paper. I admit that all this was a show put up by my conceited self, so that its power of patience and dignity may not be tarnished by the blemish of over anxiety and lack of control.

*Give me heart, O God,
For without heart there is no life.*

Finally, on 9th April, the poisoned cup of sorrows brimmed over. At 2.00 p.m. the Superintendent handed over to me a telegram from the Bombay Government conveying the bad news. I learnt later that the Superintendent knew about it even earlier, having heard the news over the radio and he had told it to some colleagues, though not to me.

I am particularly grateful for the behaviour of my co-prisoners during this period. In the beginning, when news of her illness began to arrive, they were naturally concerned and anxious to do whatever they could to help me. When, however, they came to know of my stand on this issue, that I had decided not to make any appeal to the government, they kept silent and did not try to interfere with my line of thought or action.

Thus ended the 36 years of our wedded life. Death stood up like a wall between us and we can now look across at each other only by standing near this wall.

During the last few days I had to traverse a course of many years though my determination did not desert me, it seemed as if my feet had no strength left in them. There is an old grave in the Fort compound. God knows whose it is, but ever since I arrived here I have seen it hundreds of times. Now when I look at it, I seem to have developed a certain affection for it. Last evening I gazed at it for a long time and suddenly I remembered every line of the elegy written by the Arabic poet Mutatim Bin Novera on the death of his brother, Malik.

Let me stop now. If you had been listening, you would have said, in the words of the poet Sauda:

*'For God's sake, cut your long tale short
For the story has robbed me of my sleep.'*

Appendix 6

Speech at Jama Masjid, Delhi, 1948

(After the creation of Pakistan, Maulana Azad made two historic speeches to allay the fears and anxieties of the Indian Muslims. The first speech was made at Lucknow and the second, reproduced below, was delivered at Jama Masjid, Delhi)

Dear Brethren,

You know full well the chain that has dragged my feet to this place. It is nothing new for me to address this vast crowd in the historic mosque built by Shah Jahan. I have also addressed you earlier, when your faces shone with confidence and peace of mind, instead of being smudged with weariness and doubts, as they are now. When I observe the anxiety on your faces and the desolation in your hearts today, I cannot but recollect the forgotten events of the last few years. You remember that I called you and you cut off my tongue, that I took up my pen, and you lopped off my hand, that I wanted to walk and move, and you trimmed my feet, that I wanted to turn over, and you broke my back. Even at the height of the past seven years' misguided politics which has ended, leaving a bitter taste in the mouth, I alerted you at every sign of danger, and you not only ignored my call, but revived the old traditions of denial and neglect with which people used to face the call of truth.

The result is before you. Today you are surrounded by those very dangers whose dread had led you astray from the right path.

If you ask me, I am today nothing more than something inert, or a long-lost cry, or someone who has spent his life in his homeland like a stranger. This does not mean that I have

stuck to the post I chose initially for myself because someone had clipped my wings, or because there was no other place for my nest. What I want to say is that my lapels cry because your impudent hands have torn them. My feelings are hurt and my heart is aggrieved. Will you pause and consider which path did you adopt? Which stage have you reached so far and what is your position now? If you live with fear now, if you feel mentally deranged, it is the just retribution of your past deeds.

It is not long ago when I told you that the two-nation theory was the death-knell of a life of faith and belief. I urged you to forego it because the pillars on which you relied were soon to shatter into pieces. But you heeded me not. You never thought that the passage of time would not change its ways to suit your convenience. Time did not halt in its strides. You see that those on whom you relied for support have forsaken you, left you helpless at the mercy of fate, the fate that in your dictionary is something different from the Will of God, for you term your lack of courage as fate.

The Englishman's chess-board was overturned against your wishes and the idols that you had carved to seek guidance deserted you, although you had thought that this chess-board will remain spread for ever and the worship of those idols will sustain you. I don't want to probe your wounds, nor to further increase your restlessness, but if you could look back a little towards the past, many of your knots could be unraveled. Once, while making you conscious of the need of securing India's freedom, I had told you:

‘What will be will be and no group can stop it through its inauspicious efforts. India is destined to undergo a political revolution and the twentieth century winds of freedom will slash through the bonds of Indian slavery. If you do not keep pace with time, if you continue with your present listlessness and inaction, the future historian will write that your group, a crowd of 90 millions, adopted an attitude towards the freedom of the country which was peculiar to groups that have become extinct.’

Today India is free and you can witness how the flag of free India is waving majestically from the ramparts of the Red Fort. It is the same flag which used to be the object of ridicule of the rulers and the butt of their jokes when unfurled earlier.

It is correct that time has not taken a turn according to your desires. On the other hand, it has shown due deference to the birth-right of a nation and fulfilled her aspirations. And it is this turn of events that has made you apprehensive to a certain extent. You think as if something good has been wrested away from you and replaced by something bad. This is not a fact, but an illusion. The fact is that the bad thing has disappeared and its place has been taken by good thing. Indeed, you are restless today because you had not prepared yourself for the good things and had set your heart on bad things: I refer to the foreign domination under which for ages you were like a plaything in the hands of your rulers. There was a day when you were concerned with the launching of some war. Today you are worried about the results of that war. I am really amazed at your haste that no sooner than the journey has started, you have grown apprehensive about losing your way.

My brethren, I have always endeavoured to keep politics apart from personalities and thus never entered these thorny patches. That is why most of what I had to say was said obliquely, through hints and allusions. Nevertheless, today I want to say something unequivocally. The partition of India was fundamentally wrong. The way religious differences were fanned inevitably created the signs and portents which we have witnessed and unfortunately are still witnessing today.

It is no use recapitulating the happenings of the last seven years and no good can come out of it. It must be said, however, that the rising tide of sufferings that besets the Indian Muslims today is the direct result of the misguided leadership of the Muslim League and the colossal blunders committed by it. What is happening today could hold a surprise for the Muslim League,

but not for me, for I had anticipated these consequences from the very beginning.

Now that the Indian politics has taken a new turn, there is no place here for the Muslim League. It is entirely up to us whether we can think constructively. I have invited the Muslim leaders of India to meet in Delhi in the second week of November to consider the situation. Invitations have already been dispatched. The prevailing mood of panic is but transient for I assure you that none can defeat us except we ourselves. I have always told you, and I repeat today, that you should give up the path of vacillation and doubt, and desist from wrongdoings. This triple-edge dagger of vacillation, doubt and wrongdoings is even more lethal than the two-edged sword which, according to your youth, has dealt so many blows upon you.

You should also reconsider your escapist ways which you call by the high-sounding name of migration. You must realise that it is wrong. Take heart and develop the habit of thinking. Then you will understand that these decisions of yours are but hasty. Do you have any inkling of as to where you are going or why?

Behold the minarets of this mosque bend down to ask you where have you misplaced the pages of your history! It seems but yesterday when your caravans alighted on the banks of the Jamuna and performed their ablution. How is it that you feel afraid of living here today, in this Delhi, which has been nurtured by your blood?

Dear friends, you must change yourself radically. As your wild enthusiasm of a short while ago was quite misplaced, in the same manner, your fear and terror of today is quite uncalled for. There is no place for either cowardice or frenzy in a Muslim. A true Muslim can be swayed neither by greed nor by fright. That some faces have disappeared from your sight is no cause for alarm. Indeed they had brought you together to make their departure easier. If they snatched their hands away from your hands, it is not a bad thing. But beware lest they have taken your hearts along with them. If your heart is still intact, fill it with the

vision of God who had about 1300 years ago conveyed through an illiterate Arab the message that those who have faith in God and are firm in their faith, for them there is no fear and no sorrow of any sort. The winds rise and pass. Today's wind may be a scorching tempest but it will not last long. Before our own eyes this period of tribulation will be over. You too should change with it as if you had never been in this condition ever.

I am not in the habit of repeating my words but due to your indifference I have to reiterate that the third power has left with its baggage of pride and power. Whatever was destined is coming to pass. Political thinking has thrown away its old mould and a new one is being cast now. If your hearts have still not changed and if your minds have still some reservations, then it is another matter. But if a real desire for change has found a place in your hearts, you should change in the same way as the history of the country has changed. For today, when we have already completed a revolutionary phase, some pages in the history are still blank and we can still fill them gracefully, provided we are willing to do so.

Dear friends, keep pace with the changes. Do not say that you were not ready for the change. Prepare yourself for it now. The stars may have fallen but the sun is shining bravely. Borrow some of its rays and take them to those dark corners which yearn for light.

I am not asking you to seek certificates of loyalty out of the fear of the ruling power or to live like camp-followers, as you did during the days of foreign domination. Let me remind you that some of the bright signs and symbols that you discern today in India as a heritage of the past were contributed by your own forefathers. Do not forget them. Do not forsake them. Live like their worthy inheritors. Realise that if you yourself are not willing to run away, no power on earth could make you do so.

Come, let us take the pledge that this country is ours, that we belong to it and that fundamental decisions of its destiny will remain incomplete till we participate in them.

Should you fear the quaking of the earth today, when you yourself were once like an earthquake? Should you dread the gloom now, forgetting your previous radiant existence? Should you take notice of this water trickling down from the skies and hitch up your trousers, while your forefathers plunged into the seas, trampled the hearts of the mountains, laughed at the bolts of lightings, turned away the faces of the tornadoes, challenged the tempests and made them change their path? Is your faith breathing its last that you who used to catch hold of the kings by their collars are today searching for customers who could buy your collars? You have forgotten your God so completely that one doubts whether you ever believed in Him.

Dear Brethren! I have no new antidote for you, only something that was brought about 1400 years ago by the greatest benefactor of humankind, that is, the Quranic prescription which says:

*'Do not fear and do not grieve,
And You will indeed gain the upper hand.
If you are possessed of true faith.'*

Appendix 7

Presidential Address at the Special Session of the Indian National Congress, Delhi, 1923

We have to remember that the magnitude that the events of the world assume in the pages of history is never perceived by the protagonists of those events. We too are passing through a revolutionary phase which fulfils all those conditions that according to the historians give rise to mighty revolutions. The world is heading fast towards a new turn. All things that till yesterday were believed to be the unshakable truths are today shaking to their very core. Like its principles and beliefs, the boundaries of this world are also getting blurred. Many heights have fallen down and many depths have raised their level. Having risen to the maximum point things have started falling and the gloomy night of despair has already reached the limit, after which sunrise seems to be around the corner. Who can foresee what the immediate future has in store? Even so, whatever is happening makes it abundantly clear, and we don't need any fortune teller to tell us, that a new East is emerging through revolutionary efforts. The awakening in the East which for the past 25 years was only an awakenings is today passing through subsequent stages. Ghazi Mustafa Kemal Pasha's hands have awakened not only the sleeping destiny of Turkey, they have knocked at all the doors in the east. The echoes of that knock extend on the one hand to the plains of west Asia and, on the other, to the wilderness of Africa. They are even riding the waves of the Indian Ocean and it would not be surprising if the echoes of this knock reverberate through every nook and corner of the East.

Gentlemen, India cannot ignore or forget its natural and geographical associations with the peoples' struggle in the east.

She has linked her own struggle with this movement because she is deeply conscious of and shares the sentiments of togetherness and affinity which commonly shares purpose, events and times, generate naturally in different groups living in a land. Consequently, India welcomes every nation of the East which is fighting for her freedom and feels sorry for each such nation as lagging behind her companies in this field. India assures the patriots of Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Iraq, Morocco and those of other eastern countries that millions of Indian hearts are anxious for their success, and that the attainment of freedom by these countries is no less dear to our heart than our own independence.

Gentlemen, when we look towards the magnificent palace of the Caliphs in Turkey, to congratulate her on her splendid victories, our mind immediately turns to a tiny cell in India where India's greatest son is imprisoned. I am certain that if there is anyone outside Turkey who deserves to be congratulated on Turkey's victory, he is the great leader of India, Mahatma Gandhi who raised his voice in Turkey's support at a time when no one even in Turkey had rallied forth to her defence. It was his discerning eyes that grasped the entire scope and depth of this issue at a glance and invited all Indians to make it a national issue and not that of the Muslims alone. Gentlemen, the struggle that India waged under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi for the Khilafat Movement, is a very special and significant event of the present times, and a debate will be carried on in the pages of history over its consequences. It is indeed before time for us to assess all the consequences of that struggle. Even so, some of the consequences are so obvious that they would admit of no doubt or debate and each one of these consequences is so important and significant that a struggle could be launched to attain it.

Due to the Khilafat Movement, the Hindu-Muslim unity issue, without which India's freedom would be but a disjointed dream, was able to overcome the obstacles which were blocking its progress for a long time.

Let us pause for a moment and analyse the troubles we face today in the context of the psychology of collective action. It requires no reiteration that as in the case of individuals, the real source of actions of a nation lies in its mind. When the mental development of the members of a nation reaches the stage when it may express itself externally, it waits for favourable conditions to do so. Among the favourable conditions, a strong motivation is required to surmount all differences of views and opinions and mobilise all the desperate elements of the nation on a focal point. When the individual minds join together to form the collective mind of the group, then they are moved more by emotions than by reason or logic. Consequently, the focal point too is created by emotions and not by logic. When this condition is fulfilled, active struggle commences and depending on the force behind it, a confrontation with other emergent and opposing forces takes place. Thereafter, the struggle may succeed in attaining a target or, according to the natural laws of progression, it advances but haltingly. The stoppages on the way are of varying conditions and governed by various laws but, in any case, the law of action and reaction has its way to a certain extent. At such moments a sudden mood of despondency and weariness overtakes us, the effect is left most on the body of ideas harboured by us. It seems as if a large number of stray papers which were tied in a knot had suddenly loosened or united. Differences begin to raise their head. Winds of dissension begin to blow and the national struggle has a most trying time. As, like all other conditions of a group, this too is physical, it is largely unaffected by reason or knowledge. However sensible the individuals might be, however aware of the past experiments of the world, they cannot restrain their hearts and minds from reacting to the conditions. Nevertheless, if the vital parts of the struggle are sound then all these symptoms which are but physical do not constitute any threat to it. Often it is but a momentary pause. On certain occasions it constitutes a difficult problem and sometimes it develops into a postponement which is full of dangers.

Appendix 8

Tributes

Mahatma Gandhi

I have had the privilege of being associated with Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in national work since 1920. In the knowledge of Islam he is surpassed by no one. He is a profound Arabic scholar. His nationalism is as robust as his faith in Islam. That he is today the supreme head of the Indian National Congress has deep meaning which should not be lost sight of by every student of Indian politics.

(May, 1940)

Dr. Rajendra Prasad

There is a Persian proverb, *Buzurgi b-aql ast na b-sal, Tawangari b-dil ast na b-mal*, which means: superiority or greatness proceeds from wisdom and not from years; even as generosity proceeds from large-heartedness and not from possession of wealth. If ever there was a manifestation of the truth of this saying in our history, it was when Maulana Azad was elected President only after two to three years' service of the Congress at the age of 34. Within this short period of great national awakening and excitement he had deeply impressed his colleagues and co-workers not only by his eloquence, but also by the keenness of his intellect, the soundness of his counsel and his capacity to reconcile conflicting viewpoints and bring about amity in the midst of diversity. His devotion to the country, preparedness for sacrifice and courage of conviction were demonstrated again and again during the long period of struggle,

a great portion of which he, like many of his colleagues, spent in prison or detention camps.

He held fast to Hindu-Muslim unity and never budged an inch, standing firmly by it like a rock in the midst of uncharitable criticism and worse from many of his own co-religionists. Naturally enough, all sections of the country came to love and respect him. His counsel was sought to resolve all complicated tangles and it was freely and frankly given without fear or favour. Equally, naturally, this trust in his wisdom, integrity and patriotism was exhibited when he was again elected President of the Congress in 1940 at a time when the Hindu-Muslim controversy was reaching a breaking point and a demand for a separate independent State for Muslims was being formulated and expressed. He continued as President during the most momentous period of Indo-British relations when negotiations for transfer of power were carried on again and again between the Congress through its President, Maulana Azad, and the representatives of the British Government.

I doubt if anyone else has held the responsible position of the President of the Congress continuously for a period longer than or even equal to that of the Maulana and this too at a time when most delicate and momentous questions were discussed. The Congress trusted his wisdom and integrity and he came out like pure gold through this most trying ordeal when the great bulk of his co-religionists were ranged on the other side.

It is not for me to speak about his learning and erudition. I am told that his commentary on the Holy Koran is recognized as authoritative not only in this country but also in other Muslim countries. In the midst of all his political activities, he retained his love of books and devoted not an inconsiderable portion of his time to studies. It has been said of Lokamanya Tilak that if he had not joined the political movement and instead devoted himself exclusively to Vedic studies, he would have made even more invaluable contributions to learning than he actually did. I believe the same is true of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad whose

exclusive devotion to the study of Arabic and Persian could have produced similar results.

After the attainment of independence he was naturally given the portfolio of education which included art, culture and scientific research. The great impetus and encouragement he was able to give to the development of art, literature and cultural activities and scientific research are demonstrated by the establishment of various academies and research laboratories and institutes, and the commissions which were appointed from time to time to deal with educational problems. He was a great representative of Indian culture which in its essence excludes nothing that is valuable and worth having, and absorbs what is good, noble and beautiful artistically, morally and spiritually.

The great demonstration of respect and affection which we witnessed during his journey to the burial ground was but a confirmation of our people's love and faith in his leadership and his capacity to guide.

Maulana Azad has abandoned the mortal coil, but his spirit will continue to inspire us and others yet unborn. May we prove worthy of this great heritage!

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan

We are too near the tragedy even to make a proper assessment of the great services rendered by Maulana Azad to our freedom movement and to our progress thereafter. He was a great scholar, a self-sacrificing patriot and a statesman. One great thing for which our people have to remember Maulana Azad is his work for India's unity. He was a devout Muslim and an ardent patriot. He felt that in this country, consisting of followers of many races and religions, all should work for national consolidation and progress. He suffered persecution on account of his views but he never faltered so far as his clear vision was concerned. It is essential for all of us to realise, in these days

of growing separatism, that the most important factor in India's progress is consolidation of the country and subordination of all other interests to the supreme goal. That is the lesson we have to learn from him.

Maulana Azad believed in the principle of justice in public affairs and compassion in personal relations. His was a life of search and attainment. He lived, full of glory, a life of which every Indian can be proud. I have no doubt that his memory will abide in our hearts.

From an address at public meeting in Delhi

Jawaharlal Nehru

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it has fallen to my lot often to refer in this house to the death of a colleague or some great man. I have to perform that duty, a sad duty, again today in regard to one who was with us a few days ago, and who passed away rather suddenly, producing a sense of deep sorrow and grief not only among his colleagues in Parliament, but among innumerable people all over the country.

It has become almost a commonplace, when a prominent person passes away, to say that he is irreplaceable, that his passing away has created a void which cannot be filled. To some extent that is often true; yet, I believe that it is literally and absolutely true in regard to the passing away of Maulana Azad. I do not mean to say that no great men will be born in India in future. We have had great men and we shall have great men; but, I do submit that that peculiar and special type of greatness that Maulana Azad represented is not likely to be reproduced in India or anywhere else.

I need not refer to his many qualities which we all know—his deep learning, his scholarship and his great oratory. He was a great writer, and he was great in many ways. But there are other scholars; there are other writers; there are other orators. There was in Maulana Azad a combination of the greatness of the

past with the greatness of the present. He represented and he always reminded me of what I have read in history about the great men of several hundred years ago; if I think of European history, the great men of the Renaissance, or, in a later period, of the encyclopaedists who preceded the French Revolution, men of intellect, men of action. He reminds me also of what might be called the great qualities of olden days—graciousness chiefly. There were many bad qualities in the old days, of course, but there was a certain graciousness, a certain courtesy, a certain tolerance, a certain patience which we sadly seek in the world today. There is little of graciousness in the world, though we may become more and more advanced in scientific and technical ways. Even though we may seek to reach the Moon, we do it with a lack of graciousness, with a lack of tolerance, with a lack of some things which have made life worthwhile since life began. So, it was this strange and unique mixture of the good qualities of the past, the graciousness, the deep learning and toleration with the urges of today that made Maulana Azad what he was.

Everyone knows that even in his early teens he was filled with the passion for freeing India, and he turned towards ways even of violent revolution. And then he realised, of course, soon after that, that was not the way which would gain results.

He was a peculiar and a very special representative in a high degree of that great composite culture which has gradually grown in India. I do not mean to say that everybody has to be like Maulana Azad to represent that composite culture. There are many representatives of it in various parts of India; but he, in his own venue, here in Delhi or in Bengal or Calcutta, where he spent the greater part of his life, represented this synthesis of various cultures which have come one after another to India, rivers that had flowed in and lost themselves in the ocean of Indian life, India's humanity, affecting them, changing them, and being changed themselves by them.

He came to represent more specially the culture of India as affected by the culture of the nations of Western Asia, especially

Iran and Arabia. So, in that sense, I say that I can hardly conceive of any other person coming who can replace him, because there was already a change in the age which produced him and that age is past. A few of us are just relics, who have some faint idea of that age which is past.

I do not know if the generation that is growing up will even have any emotional realisation of that age. We are functioning in a different way; we think in a different way; and a certain gap in mental appreciation and understanding separates us, separates the generations.

It is right we change; I am not complaining. Change is essential lest we become rooted to some past habit which, even if it was good at some time, became bad later. But I cannot help expressing a certain feeling of regret that with the bad, the good of the past days is also swept away. That good was something that was eminently represented by Maulana Azad.

So we mourn today the passing of a great man, a man of luminous intelligence and a mighty intellect with an amazing capacity to pierce through any problem to its core. I used the word 'luminous'. I think perhaps that is the best word I can use about his mind—a luminous mind. When we miss and when we part with such a companion, friend, colleague, comrade, leader, teacher—call him what you will—there is inevitably a tremendous void created in our life and activities.

It is possible that the initial reaction may not be a full realisation of the void. The initial reaction is one of shock and sorrow. Gradually, as days pass, the void appears deeper and wider and it becomes more and more difficult to fill that place which was filled by the leader who has passed away. But that is the way of the world and we have to face it. We have to face it not negatively but positively, by devoting and dedicating ourselves to what he stood for and trying to carry on the good work which he and others who have left us—captains and generals of our peaceful forces who have worked for the independence and progress and advancement of India, who have come and who

have gone, leaving their message behind. And so I hope that though he may go, he will live and his message will live and illumine us as it did in the past.

Speech in the Lok Sabha, New Delhi

Dr. Zakir Husain

In order to make something of life, every man, be he great or small, seeks light and warmth from some source. When I was a boy, I also wanted to light the earthen lamp of my being. The first wick of my lamp I lit from Maulana's lamp. As a student, I used to read his *Al-Hilal*. I used to read it aloud to a group of fellow students. It was then that my wick caught fire.

Maulana had a many-sided personality. He was not only a fighter for freedom and a great statesman; he was a great theologian and a great scholar as well. He was a great literary artist, and possessed an excellent taste and rare aesthetic sensibility. He loved books ardently. Let nobody imagine that he ever forsook scholarship and literature for politics. To the last, he was faithful to his first love. Yet he knew that knowledge could become a burden. It could weigh a person down and make him utterly ineffectual. While he was supreme in learning, he was also fully conscious of his social responsibilities and the duties he owed to his country. He showed that he could fight for what was right, that he could devote his whole life to wrest the freedom of his country and, after achieving that freedom, to strive to make something out of it, to build on its foundations the grand edifice of a good and graceful national life. He proved that learning is not some cabbalistic incantation meant to outwit and confuse simple folks, but a radiance which could light the path of others.

This scholar, thinker and warrior of righteousness has left a glorious example behind. Persons of discernment know that to speak out the true word, to declare the truth, the bitter truth,

is the greatest 'Jihad (righteous war) of all. Telling the truth leads to much unpleasantness. People resent it. Did not they bear resentment against the Maulana? I address myself to fellow Muslims in the audience. Let us recollect, did we not use every possible means of hurting the Maulana's feelings? Did we not censure him in the worst possible terms? In spite of all that, did that soul of dignity ever utter a word against anyone? Is there any among you who can come forward and testify that he ever by words or gesture complained or expressed resentment against his detractors? He bore all, never minding anything. Yet he never forebore from telling the truth.

He did not mix much with people. Of late, he had become even more retiring in his habits. But even though he met few people, he was a friend of all. Even though he kept to himself in his room, he was our comrade. He made us feel that he shared our life, for he shared and inspired our highest aspirations.

Maulana is no more with us. As the Rastrapati (Dr. Rajendra Prasad) said, the pen which scattered pearls as well as hurled bolts, is no more; the tongue that showered petals as well as emitted sparks, which consumed falsehood and illumined truth, is no more. The pen lies broken and the tongue is silenced. But the Maulana lives, for his example survives, and we ought to borrow light and warmth from that example and orient our lives on the lines he desired and which he exemplified in his own life. We have a mighty task before us. It is not easy to build up this nation of ours. There is no magic or trick which can achieve for India; not one but many generations will have to give their all before we can build up our nation.

For some time the firmament of our nation was resplendent with a host of brilliant stars. One by one they have vanished from our sight. But let us not mind that. Even if we mind it, what can we do about it? We are helpless. Go they must. It is God's will. None can bring them back.

However, our duty is clear. Let us try to fulfil the work of these great men. What was being done by one may perhaps be accomplished by a thousand jointly. But let us always strive to look in the direction shown by the great men, towards untarnished truth, towards selfless action, towards objective learning, towards mutual understanding. Let us realise that the duties that we owe in our life require to be fulfilled daily. There is never an end to duty.

In my opinion the greatest service which the Maulana did was to teach people of every religion that there are two aspects of religion. One separates and differentiates and creates hatred. This is the false aspect. The other, the true spirit of religion, brings people together; it creates understanding. It lies in the spirit of service, in sacrificing self for others. It implies belief in unity, in the essential unity of things. And this is a lesson which must be learned by men of all religious denominations, by all those who want to form factions based on language or on caste or creed and thus aim to destroy the unity of our life. The disease which ails us today is that our small and narrow loyalties have succeeded in gaining the upper hand. We are more attached to little groups, and do not fully comprehend the bigger ones. It is not necessary to break or destroy the smaller loyalties. It is not necessary that we cease being a Sikh, a Hindu, a Muslim or a Parsi. But we must put our country and the whole mankind first before we can be worthy of being called a true Muslim, a true Hindu, a true Christian, a true Parsi or a true Sikh. The life of Maulana offers a radiant example of this ideal. This is what we need most at present in our everyday life, in our body politics. We should firmly resolve today that we shall breathe this spirit—the true spirit of religion—into the life of our nation.

Rendered from speech in Urdu at a public meeting in Delhi

Humayun Kabir

It is almost fifty years ago that Maulana Abu'l Kalam Azad first burst upon the Indian scene, but even to this day his

countrymen—admirers no less than critics—have not been able to make up their minds as to whether he was more distinguished as a man of letters or as a statesman. He was still a young man in his early twenties when he took the literary world of Northern India by storm with his flaming articles in *Al-Hilal* and *Al-Balagh*. He had already attracted notice as a promising poet, but it was his political and religious studies that marked him out as a man of outstanding abilities. As mere literary efforts they are something unique in the history of Urdu language and literature. Rarely has there been such a combination of rhetoric and eloquence, of wit and poetry, of biting sarcasm and lofty idealism. A new style in Urdu prose grew out of the models supplied in the editorials of *Al-Hilal*. Later in his translation of the Quran he achieved a distinction of language and thought that has rarely been equaled and never surpassed in Urdu.

It was not, however, the poetic grace or the literary excellence of his articles that captured the imagination of Indian Muslims. They had been living in an atmosphere of despondency and lack of faith since the rise of British power in India. The defeat of 1857 had deepened their loss of spirit. Sir Syed Ahmed tried to restore the falling fortunes of the community by courting the favour of the conquerors and withdrawing it from the field of active politics. Shunning of politics almost inevitably changed into opposition to politics. Such a negative policy was bad in itself, and the circumstances of the day made it a source of great danger to the country and the community. The attempt of the Muslims to withdraw from politics was in sharp contrast to the rising consciousness of nationalism among the Hindus who were becoming more and more politically active. With all his friendship and regard for the Hindu community, Sir Syed's politics therefore inevitably took a turn which, from being anti-political, became, in the hands of his successors anti-Hindu.

Support for the government and opposition to the Congress were the two aspects of the policy of a majority of Indian

Muslims when Maulana Azad first appeared on the scene. To the vast majority of the semi-politically-minded Muslims of the day there seemed no alternative policy to that of Sir Syed: namely, cooperation with the British and separation from the Hindus. Maulana Azad's clear and unambiguous call of complete identification with the national movement and strong opposition to the forces of British imperialism at first shocked and then angered sections of the leading Muslim politicians of the day. When he declared that independence of India was necessary not only in the interest of Indian Muslims but of the entire Muslim world, many of them could hardly understand what he meant. His stand appeared to the majority of the Muslim intelligentsia of the day as the starkest political heresy. As a sequel, *Al-Hilal* became a focus for the resurgent spirit of Indian Muslims.

For almost fifty years Maulana Azad stood as a champion of the claims of nationalism, progress, freedom and democracy. This has seemed a paradox to many but will not surprise those who know about his family background and upbringing. He counted among his forefathers famous religious divines and successful men of affairs, who shared the common characteristic of fearless devotion to truth. His father's maternal grandfather Maulana Munwwaruddin was disgusted with the state of affairs in pre-1857 India and decided to migrate to Mecca. He could not however do so as the Revolt started while he was still in Bhopal and death overtook him before he could leave India.

Maulana Azad's father was Maulana Khairuddin who also could not reconcile himself to the degradation that seemed to threaten Indian Muslims. He actually did what his grandfather had wished to do, went to Mecca and settled there. He became well known throughout the Islamic world after an Arabic work of his in ten volumes was published in Egypt. He was also greatly interested in social work and was responsible for the repair of the Nahar Zubedia which was the main source of water for the people of Mecca.

Maulana Khairuddin believed in the old ways of life and had no faith in modern western education. Nor did he have much regard for the existing institutions of oriental learning in India or outside. He, therefore, arranged for Maulana Azad's instruction at home by some of the most eminent scholars of the day. Maulana Azad fully justified his father's decision and was able to complete his studies at the exceptionally young age of sixteen.

Soon after, Maulana Azad came across the writings of Sir Syed Ahmed and was greatly impressed by his views on modern education. He realised that a man could not be truly educated in the modern world unless he studied modern science, philosophy and literature. He, therefore, decided to learn English and French and soon started to read English newspapers with the help of dictionaries. He kept up his interest in the study of English to the last day of his life.

There followed a period of great mental crisis in Maulana Azad's life. He began to question prevailing customs and beliefs, social and political attitudes and even the religious traditions which he had inherited from his family. Differences among the different sects of Muslims raised doubts in his mind about religion itself and it was several years before he was able to achieve for himself a rational acceptance of the religious truths of Islam.

This was also the period when his political ideas began to change. For some time he was attracted by the revolutionary groups which were working for the liberation of India. When he was about twenty, he went out for a tour in Iraq, Egypt, Syria and Turkey. His travels in these lands confirmed his belief that not only traditional education but the traditional ways of life must change if Muslims were to play a creative role in the modern world. Inspired by a new enthusiasm for nationalism and rational belief in religion, he started *Al-Hilal* soon after his return to India.

The success of *Al-Hilal* was phenomenal. It brought not only a new personality but a new political temper into the Indian scene. It created a revolutionary stir among the masses and

challenged the leadership of the Aligarh party. This party had based its politics on the principle that Musalmans must be loyal to the British rule in India. Maulana Azad proclaimed a different programme and declared that Muslims must identify themselves with the common aspirations of Indian nationhood and challenge the foundations of British rule in India. The success of *Al-Hilal* disturbed the Government who sought to curb it in various ways. Finally, the Government interned the intrepid young editor in an attempt to control his activities. When, after several years, Maulana Azad came out of internment in 1920, he was immediately recognised as a national leader in his own right and one of the first lieutenants of Mahatma Gandhi. He became President of the Congress in 1923 when he was barely 35. No one has become President of the Indian Congress at a comparable age. Since then his life has been identified with the Indian national struggle and it was appropriate that he should be the Congress President when the British finally agreed to hand over power to Indian hands in 1946.

This brief review will indicate that there was nothing strange in the role which Maulana Azad played in Indian public life. Descended from a family of religious divines, his upbringing and training were in keeping with the traditions of his family. His role as a reformer and a patriot was a natural development of his study of the theology and religious lore of Islam. With its emphasis on democracy, freedom and rationalism, Islam provoked in the youthful Maulana Azad a violent reaction against the servile politics, the outmoded class divisions and the mental obscurantism of the day. He stood for freedom from political bondage, feudal obsequiousness and superstitious servility. His role will seem surprising only to those who have forgotten the traditions of earlier Islam and remember the beliefs which grew up round what Englishmen have often described as the Indian Mohammedanism. It is interesting to note that the orthodox scholars brought up in a purely oriental tradition responded first to Maulana Azad's call. It was among the members of the

Jamiat-ul-Ulema that he found his earliest and most steadfast colleagues and followers. It was the emphasis on freedom in all its aspects which attracted Maulana Azad from the cloister of the recluse into the battle-ground of politics and kept him in the centre of the struggle till his dying day.

The politician was however never able to submerge the scholar in Maulana Azad. The scholar is concerned with the permanent values of life unlike the politician who usually concentrates on the events of the day. Maulana Azad was always more of a statesman than a diplomat or political tactician. Two qualities which marked all his political actions were his balance and sobriety and his clarity of judgment. With all a poet's sensitiveness, he never allowed his emotions to take control of his political decisions. His like or dislike of a person rarely if ever swayed his judgment. He tried to assess every situation with an objectivity that was surprising to friend and foe alike. From this balance and sobriety followed the clarity of his vision. So long as a man is rational and judges things in the light of reason, he cannot err. Mistakes in politics, as elsewhere, occur only when prejudices sway the balance and prevent us from weighing the different elements in the situation before us. His sobriety and clarity of judgment gave Maulana Azad's political decisions a kind of impersonality which awed friends and disconcerted opponents. This also explains why in the midst of the bitterest of controversies, not one word of anger, indignation or indictment ever passed his lips, even against those who took every opportunity of trying to insult and humiliate him. In the midst of storm and conflict he remained unperturbed. This discipline developed in him a tremendous personality and his courage and determination won the admiration of even his worst enemies.

It was inevitable that with a personality at once so resplendent and so reserved, all kinds of stories and legends were built up around Maulana Azad. There is the apocryphal story of his studentship in Al-Azhar. As stated above, he was educated at home and went to Al-Azhar only as a visitor after he had finished

his studies. The tremendous reputation as a scholar which he had built up while yet in his teens is revealed in another story. He once carried on a lengthy controversy by correspondence with a well-known scholar of the day who expressed a desire to meet him in person in order to reach a decision on certain points. When the youthful Maulana arrived, the old savant received him and politely enquired why his father had sent him instead of coming himself. There is also the story of a meeting to which he was invited as the chief-guest of the day but was refused entrance as no one could believe that a callow youth could be the well-known scholar for whom everyone was waiting.

Providence often distributes its gifts to different persons in diverse measures. To some it gives physical strength and to others, intellectual eminence. To some it gives affluence and to others fame and recognition. It is rarely that all these gifts are showered upon the same individual. Maulana Azad was one of the fortunate few to whom Providence gave in full measure all the things which human beings desire and yet with a contrariety which is beyond human understanding. Combined all these gifts with a sensitiveness and sympathy for human suffering which turned his personal achievements into an agony at the sight of so much folly, so much futility and so much hatred all around.

It was inevitable that a man like Maulana Azad was lonely in spirit. No one who came near him failed to notice the solitariness of his spirit. Courteous, kindly and a man of infinite charm, he yet breathed an atmosphere of reserve which few could penetrate. He lived in his own world of thought, and out of his musings derived the strength to endure the giant agony of the world. With all his exquisite sense of human suffering, there was in him a courage of endurance and an optimism about the essential goodness of man which sustained him in the midst of all his sufferings. Essentially a rationalist, he believed that God's will must ultimately triumph. This was his faith and this is his testament to the people of his generation in India and abroad.

Dr. K. G. Saiyidain

Maulana was first and last an educationist—an educationist in the wider and deeper sense of the word, *i.e.*, one passionately concerned with the inculcation of the right ideals and values and attitudes in the people. Ever since he started his career as a writer and journalist and launched his *Al-Hilal*, his profound scholarship and his knowledge of religion, history, philosophy and literature were devoted to preaching the message of true patriotism and of the good life for the individual and the community, which knows no barriers of race or caste or creed or exclusive geographical loyalties. His powerful speeches and writings swept across the country, galvanized the hearts and minds of the older as well as the younger generation and gave them hope, courage and confidence. He taught them to respect their own culture and history but did not encourage the attitude of only looking backward for inspiration. He was, and continued to be, forward-looking all his life.

The secret of his success as an educationist lay in the fact that he practiced in his life what he preached in his works. He had the qualities of character and intellect which he wished to inculcate in the people of his country. His whole life bore a shining stamp of sincerity and truth—which he loved and advocated with Socratic passion; truth which makes no compromise with expediency and no concessions to ill-informed criticism or opposition, however bitter it might be; truth for which he was prepared to pay the highest price by courting imprisonment at the hands of a foreign government and misunderstanding and even insults at the hands of his own countrymen; truth about which he once quoted this famous verse of a Persian poet:

*The message that is embedded in
my heart is not the Mulla's sermon;
it can only be uttered on the
scaffold, not from the pulpit!*

No one can achieve success as an educationist unless he has caught some little spark of this divine fire.

As a Minister, who presided over the educational destinies of the country since the attainment of the independence, he has left the impress of his great personality in many directions. During this fateful decade, so full of difficulties and crises, education was not able to secure adequate resources for its development. But he espoused the cause of education with vigour and succeeded in winning for it a place on the map of the Five-Year Plans of national development. While controversy raged indecisively about Basic Education, he had it firmly accepted as the pattern of national education. He had the problem of secondary education surveyed by a commission and its reconstruction was promptly initiated under his guidance. He was deeply interested in the improvement of standards in the universities and was solicitous to safeguard their due autonomy. Apart from other measures taken to strengthen higher education, he established the University Grants Commission to give special thought to its needs and problems.

His humanism could not reconcile itself to the fact that many groups and classes be debarred from full participation in the growing life of the country, because centuries of social neglect and tyranny had deprived them of their human rights. In order to equalize and democratize opportunity, several schemes of scholarship were initiated of which the most noticeable was one for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other Backward Classes for which the financial provision was raised from Rs. 0.3 million to Rs. 20 million during his regime.

Technical education expanded and developed almost beyond recognition during these few years. So did the programme of educational publications, under which hundreds of useful reports, brochures and monographs were brought out, including a few authoritative and scholarly works like *Philosophy, Eastern and Western* and the history of the struggle for freedom in 1857.

Cultural and international activities, which had hardly any place in the old Education Department before 1945, came into their own. Through the establishment of the three National Akademies and the Indian Council of Cultural Relations; through the fuller development of the Departments of Archaeology, Archives and Anthropology; through the growing relationship with UNESCO in the cause of peace and international understanding and through the promotion of cultural exchanges with many foreign countries, cultural activities received a new stimulus in the country and Indian culture a new recognition and respect abroad. As a writer and a man of culture, he was sensitive to the financial plight of writers, artists and others working in the field of culture and he sponsored a scheme under which those in really indigent circumstances could be given financial assistance. This was, no doubt, a new scheme so far as our National Government was concerned, but patronage of arts and letters by the "court" has been part of Indian tradition for centuries. What was new was his care to see that no strings of any kind direct or indirect, were attached to financial help from the State.

In many problems of great delicacy and complexity it was his large-hearted and balanced approach which showed us the right path. He had a phased programme formulated for the development of Hindi but insisted that it should be so implemented as to give no cause for grievance or apprehension to other national languages, which were equally dear to him. When, in the first flush of freedom and nationalism, many who had themselves received western education wanted to oust English or at least relegate it to the background, this man of vision who was himself a product of the traditional system of eastern education, insisted that English should be retained and given an important place in our national life.

He was, above all, deeply interested in the welfare of the teacher community and worked hard not only to improve their financial condition but also to raise their social status. I know

how, whenever there were any major difficulties that teachers had to face anywhere in the country, he took personal interest in them and they knew that they could always rely on his sympathy and understanding. I recall with poignant interest the words that he spoke at the last meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Education only a fortnight before his death. They will bear repetition because they bring a farewell word of appreciation from him to hundreds of thousands of our teachers all over the country. I hope our teachers will cherish them with affection and government and other educational authorities will honour them as a legacy:

“Whatever may be the system that we may adopt, there can be no real improvement without an improvement in the quality of our teachers. For various reasons our teachers have been unhappy in the recent past. You are aware of some of the steps taken by the Ministry to improve the condition of service of teachers and raise their status in society. One of the main achievements in the Second Five-Year Plan has been the improvement of salary scales of teachers in Primary and Basic schools. Further measures for improving the morale of teachers at all levels are also constantly before me.

“While these measures have done a good deal to raise the morale of teachers, some of the good effects have been lost because of constant and carping criticisms of our existing teachers. I know that many of them are ill-trained and some have come to the profession only as a last resort, but at the same time we must recognise that in spite of great difficulties they have served the nation well. We must realize their difficulties and appreciate the great service they have done to the nation by looking after the educational needs of the younger generation. Many of them have shown a devotion to their duty and a spirit of service which deserves the warmest praise from all who have the true interest of the nation at heart. I hope that the Central Government and the State Governments will keep these facts constantly in mind and do nothing which can in any

way impair the morale of the teachers or making them feel that their services in the cause of education are not properly appreciated.”

At this very meeting, he also gave—as if with a prophetic vision that this was for him the last occasion to do so—his appraisal of the work of the Ministry, with the objectivity that characterised all his thinking and judgment. He stated clearly that, from the point of view of what was possible under the difficult circumstances of the last decade, there was no need for us to be apologetic, that we could hold our head high at what had been achieved during these few years. This was the assessment of the practical statesman. But, as a person of vision who could not only look back on the road that had been traversed but also see the goal ahead, he frankly confessed that from the point of view of what was desirable, progress was obviously inadequate and unsatisfactory. It is now our duty and the challenge of his memory to us to build a bridge between the possible and the desirable.

But as a man, the Maulana was even greater than his work as a Minister. With what grace and dignity and sense of justice did he preside over our activities! Never interfering in details, not even greatly interested in them, unless they impinged in some way on principles or policy; always ready to help and encourage, always willing to overlook faults and weaknesses except when they encroached in any way on the public interest or the integrity of administration; always shunning personal publicity, sometimes even with indignation! I had standing instructions to decline politely any requests that institutions, organisations, associations or buildings be associated with his name. “So long as I am a Minister, I cannot allow any such thing.” He would not even accept honorary degrees from the universities. If I remember all-right, he had only once accepted such a degree in the early years of his ministership. He presided with incomparable poise and dignity over the conferences of Education Ministers and the Central Advisory Boards of

Education, unraveling complex issues with patience and understanding. We would sometimes be worried about possible conflicts and complications which might arise when many diverse views had to be reconciled, but not the Maulana. The same sympathy and understanding and absence of a doctrinaire approach which enabled him to deal with complex political situations guided him in the educational field and kept the keel of our educational ship steady.

—*From the 'Education Quarterly'*

Acharya J.B. Kripalani

What are then the outstanding impressions left on those who had the privilege of being associated with the Maulana, for more than three decades, particularly in the days of India's struggle for independence? It is that in matters fundamental he had thought out things for himself in his early youth and had come to certain definite conclusions. These were that India must be free, free not only for its own sake but for the sake of the rest of the colonial world including the Islamic countries.... He realized that the only way to independence was to bring into the movement the masses of India.

Fortified by this conviction, he never wavered in his faith or in the leadership of Gandhiji. Of course, like many others he did not believe in non-violence as a creed, but remained loyal to the policy that had been adopted by the Congress. These convictions stood the test of time. No vicissitude in his own political life or the alignment of forces in the country could change them....

For years the Congress Working Committee was just like a family, and in the family circle Maulana Sahib's great scholarship and his genial temperament enlivened his conversation whenever we of the Congress Working Committee met at lunch, tea or dinner, or when at Wardha we enjoyed the simple but large-hearted hospitality of that patriot of the mercantile community, Jamnalal Bajaj.

The company was regaled with anecdotes drawn from history, geography and the biographies of great personages in history, particularly from Islamic countries. He would tell us where a particular custom rose or from where a particular fruit or dish was introduced in India.

It is well known that after Independence many popular causes had his support in the counsels of the mighty created by the new order. Among them his was an independent voice. Where none could oppose, he ventured to remonstrate. On rare occasions, he did succeed. On his death it was thus natural for popular opinion to feel that the restraining influence of sanity had disappeared from the political life of the country. Here then was Maulana Sahib, a great divine, a great scholar, a great orator in Urdu, a great fighter for national freedom. With all his fervent love for the country, he was an internationalist to the core. Great as was his contribution to the freedom fight, his memory will live more as a harmonious personality full of knowledge and wisdom.

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